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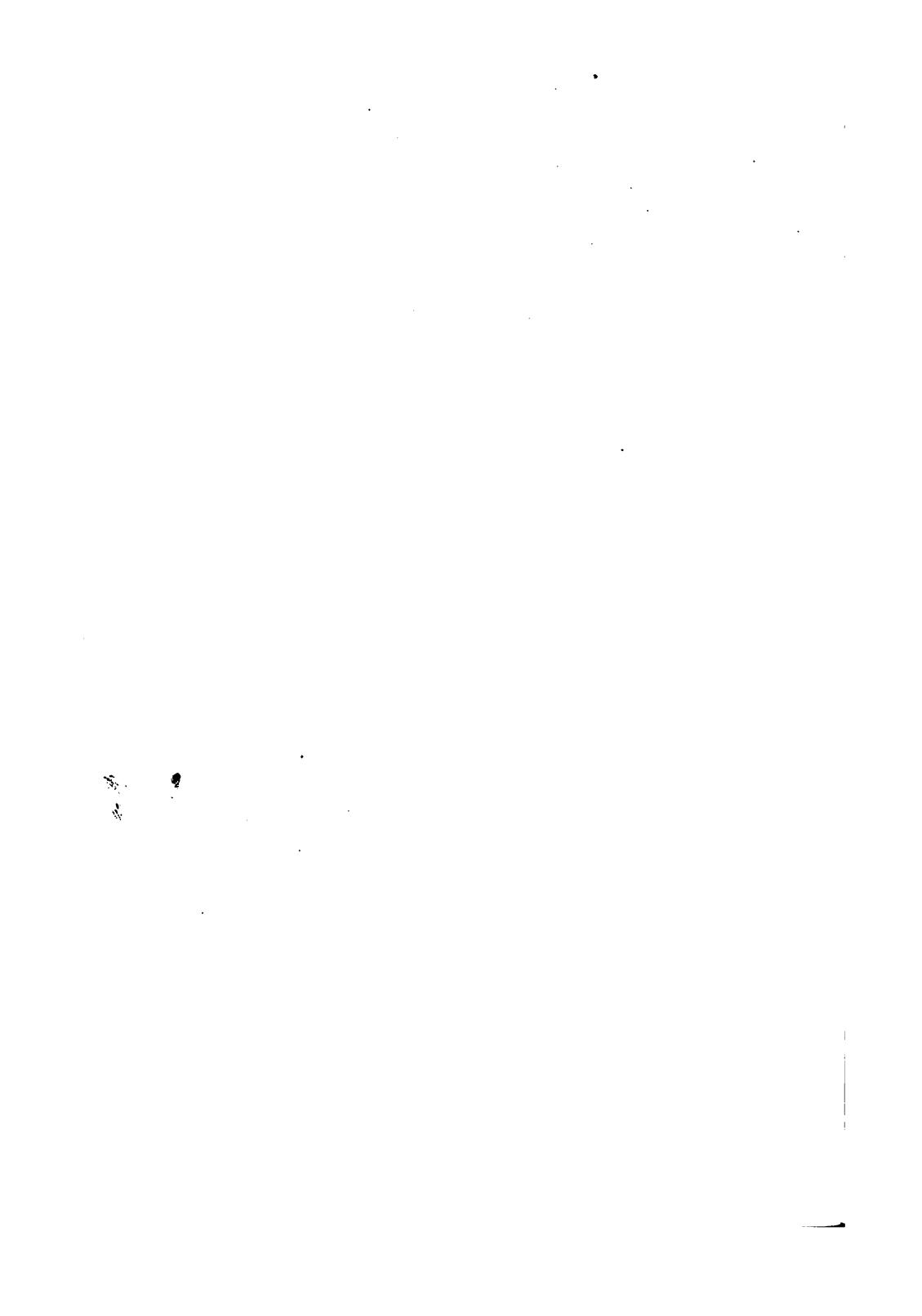
THE DEAR GIRL.

VOLUME II.



THE DEAR GIRL.

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THE DEAR GIRL.

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON,"
ETC. ETC.

"Ce qui t'arrive, c'est l'amour, ma fille! c'est l'amour dans sa sainte naïveté, l'amour comme il doit être: involontaire, rapide, venu comme un voleur qui prend tout!

"Les sens peuvent s'appréhender et les idées être en désaccord; au contraire, souvent les caractères s'accordent et les personnes se déplaisent."

BALZAC, *Ursule Mirouet.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOLUME II.



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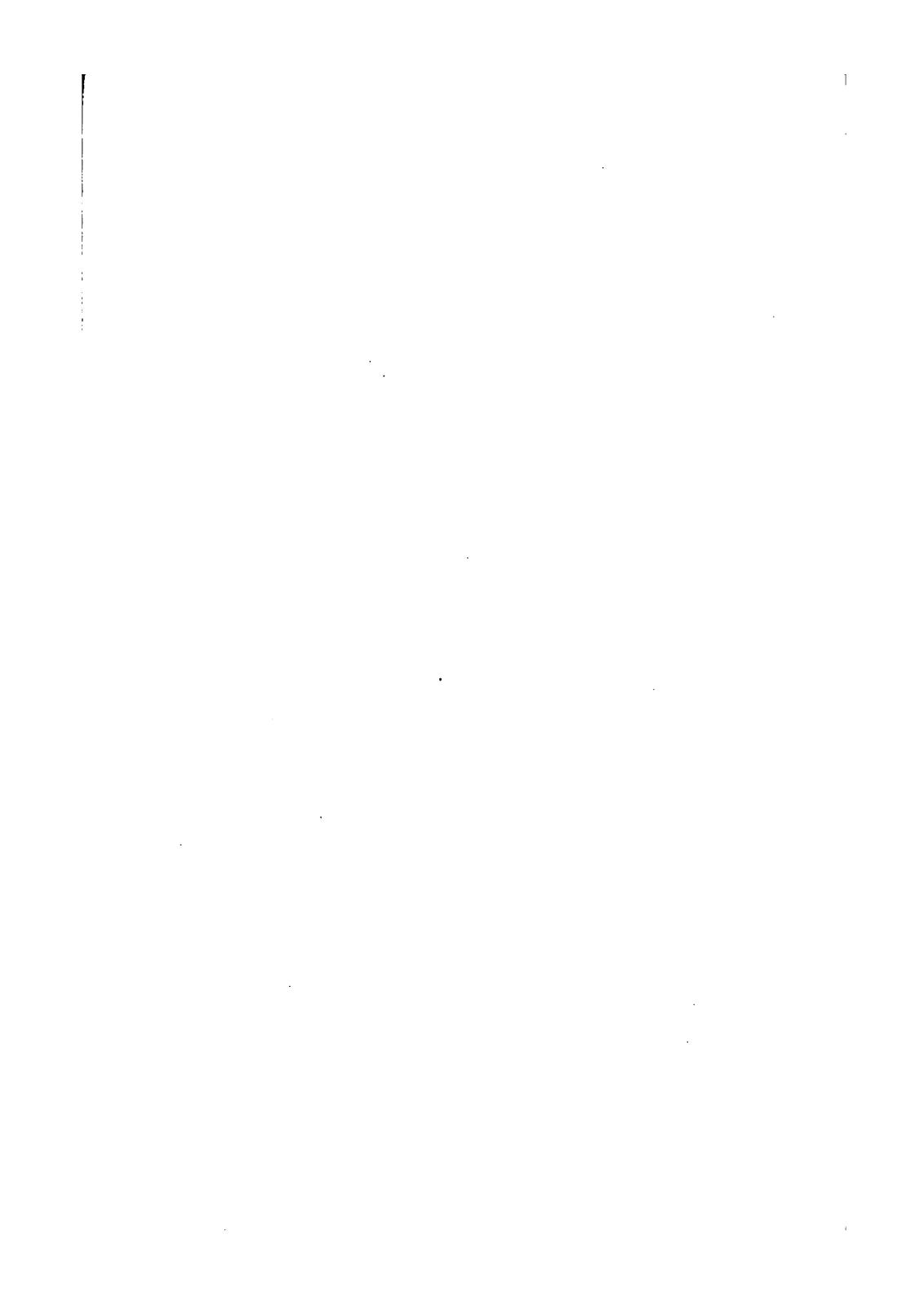
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THE DEAR GIRL.

CHAPTER I.

A STORM.

FOR two days the gale continued at the little town, neither increasing nor subsiding. In the morning, as in the evening, the air was of the cold bluish-slate colour, and in the streets, in the shops where the owners sat uncomfortable, with their doors fast closed, and doing no business, was heard the roar and tumbling of the breakers as at the back of a wall. No one went abroad, except a few enthusiasts who would not give up their day's walk, and

who, having trudged to the top of the great cliffs, after being blown about, struggling with their hats, staggering to keep their feet, came down with news that the sight from thence was “awfully grand,” the sea far out in angry mist, and breaking and roaring in on the shore like a furious demon.

No ships were seen. Even the old *Eagle*, the daily boat, a stout, clumsy, dowdy packet that would bear any rude treatment, did not ply. The colony seemed a city of the dead, the little streets were empty. Sharp faces, with a pinched and desolate expression, peered out from the little windows hopelessly.

The way in which this change affected Mr. Dacres was pitiable. He lay in a chair, or on a sofa, in the most miserable state of despondency, asking, over and over again: had he been born for this sort of thing—a man of his genius, wit, and parts? What was to become of him?—the bright hours of life passing away, the prizes slip-

ping from him, and he would die in this miserable “expatriation.” Col. Vivian came over again and again. Lucy was delighted with this new friend; to her the state of the weather was a purely indifferent thing. Happy those independent of such paltry influences! He was well read, fond of music, poetry, and what not; and Lucy, at her humble instrument, was happy to play and even sing for him, according to the instruction received at Miss Pringle’s from M. Pontet, the master at that establishment.

“I ought to be gone,” said the colonel, “and yet I shall confess I am not sorry for this forced delay—”

“But why must you go?” said Lucy; “you might stay for the week, at least.”

“I shall be here again very soon,” he said. “I must come by this way shortly.” And he sighed and looked down.

“And why, now?” said Dacres, looking at him curiously, as if he were witness.

“There is a dismal beat,” said the officer,

coldly, “on which I must walk—and for many years, I dare say.”

It came to be the third day. The night had been very stormy indeed, and tenants of the “little crockery” houses of the town (so an indignant colonist called them) were kept awake by angry roaring and moaning, and the sound of tiles bursting from the roof and clattering noisily down the street. When the dawn came, the streets were as clean and dry as though sweepers had been at work all night ; the slate-colour had gone, and it was very dark and gloomy. There was a mysterious stillness along that flat, sandy, dismal track, which, for so many miles, edges the French coast. The two long wooden piers were strained and cracking ; and the fishermen, standing about idly, prophesied it would not bear much more.

None of the boats were out. There was the *Hélène*, belonging to this port, and which was due in a day or two. Every one

knew Captain Muret; none better than Madame Muret, in an old nightcap, who harangued the fishermen, now and again, that he would never put out in such weather. Muret had risen from the ranks, was the only fisherman of the place who was actually commander, and part owner of a brig, some three hundred tons burden. No wonder they had a interest in Muret, or thought that the *Hélène* was the only vessel in the trade.

Captain Filby was out on this day. Strange to say, his spirits were not affected by this weather. He did not call it a “hole of a place.” He seemed rather to get respect for it.

“A fine, bracing, hearty day, like one of our honest English gales. I didn’t think they had it in ‘em. To see these creatures skulking and shivering about; why, they’re only half men.” Captain Filby even trudged vigorously to the top of the cliffs, and looked down over the tremendous scene, to where

an awful, black, heavy curtain, charged with horror and destruction, was hanging over the English coast. “ How they’re catching it over there ! ” he said. As he was looking, and holding on to his hat, he saw a black object far out at sea ; it was coming on fast, and growing larger. “ A ship, I declare,” he said, and got out his glass.

He watched it for a long time, and saw that it was a brig, labouring to keep well out. She had suffered a great deal, and her “ poles ” were bare enough.

“ You won’t do it, my lads,” said the captain, coolly, “ even if you are British ; which I doubt. You have a froggy finicking look about you.”

The captain came down leisurely, walked round by the port, and recognized a thin gendarme who was shivering in a doorway, feeling every blast of the wind like a stab, and told him there was a ship off the coast. Presently a motley crowd went down to the pier, and, under shelter of a wall, peeped

out at the solitary vessel. It was now in closer. Never is the struggle that rages between man and nature brought to such a satisfactory issue, as in a storm. It is a fair battle, and in most instances, if not surprised, man wins.

The boat was drawing nearer and nearer, and a clever young fisherman, with sharp eyes, made out, as it had been suspected from the first, that it was actually the *Hélène*, the cherished boat with Captain Muret on board. That news soon spread, and servants rushing up-stairs into dismal little rooms, with a dramatic tossing of arms and appeals to the "bon Dieu!" and tragic faces over the "poor children" who were being "assassinated" on the water. Tourlou, the oldest fisherman, said, confidently, that in about half an hour or forty minutes, it would be all over!

Our Lucy was sitting in their little drawing-room with her mamma. "Papa Harco," was in bed, "not well; but I

suppose it will end, one of these days!" He had "something on his chest," he thought. Vivian was there, as usual, now reading, now talking, while Lucy and her mamma worked.

It was about four o'clock, and Papa Harco was "thinking of getting upon his legs," when, with tears pouring down her cheeks, the little landlady opposite burst in, and said that there was the most hideous misery going on down at the port; that the "poor children" were there close on shore, perishing before our eyes; and that Jacques and the whole town was up there, looking on, and could do nothing.

"What!" said Vivian, excited, "is she gone ashore?"

But the little landlady could give no details.

"I shall go out and see," he said, rising. "One might give a little advice. The French are so dull in everything about the sea. I shall be back in half an hour."

"Oh! don't go," said Lucy, piteously.

But he went. Lucy sat at the window. Half an hour went by, and he did not return. What was the meaning of this? There was no one to ask; for the whole town had gone up to the port.

As Vivian was going down to the quay, he fell in with three sailors, whose dress, build, and bearing told him they were English seamen. They were coming out of the *Nancy Baker*, of Hull, which had brought coals for a factory, that was some way from the town. They had just returned to their vessel, and were going up where all the world were going. Vivian spoke to one, who proved to be the mate, a quiet, stolid young fellow, of about five-and-thirty, and whom he heard the men call John Davy. Davy said it was going to be a poor business, he was afeard.

They went along the wooden pier, past the large crucifix more than seven feet high, all gilt and painted, set up by the

fishermen, and round whose foot was a whole cluster of praying women. Was there not here Jean's sister—he was in the *Hélène*—and Paul's wife, and many more distracted creatures, and the captain's own wife, the most collected and confident of them all, looking out, with her hands shading her eyes, to that eternal sheet of dull terrible slate, which was now and again lit up with flashes of white? There was a fringe of eager, painful faces, bent forward and looking out into the storm, with clasped hands and strained eyes, thus getting into the front.

The present state of things was this: The brig was in a poor way, indeed, for there it lay, not two hundred yards away, grounded on the flat Dieppe shore, the bather's paradise—a miserable black tene-ment, now visible, now swallowed up and devoured by an overwhelming rush of waves, which, when they retired, showed a black ragged mast and a few figures like flies

hanging on it. At every disappearance there was a shriek and a wail from the shore; at every reappearance another cry and wail. "Oh, they will save them—they must save them!" Colonel Vivian heard some one say confidently, as he came up.

But these attempts were of the feeblest sort. They had tried to launch a boat, though no one had volunteered to go in it, and it was smashed into firewood at one crash against the pier.

"It is hopeless—it is madness," said the French sailors, gloomily pointing to the fragments. Others had brought a rope to the cliffs, and were going through a laborious show of flinging it out. There were preparations of the same description being made with the same elaborate show, and to an enormous amount of gesticulation and chatter. John Davy gave one rapid glance up and down, took all in—the broken boat, the ropes—"with half an eye," and said aloud:

“ Well, of all the Jack-a-donkeys I ever see! Why, they might as well throw them out a spool of cotton !”

There was an official air over the whole, also; for here were gendarmes and the mayor himself fussing about and directing, though there was nothing to be directed, and taking notes for the “verbal process” of the whole, which he would address to the prefect.

“ Why,” said Davy, “ the men’ll be lost afore their eyes while they are busy with their pack-thread. There’s another of ’em off. I give ’em twenty minutes, and where will they all be ?”

“ In God’s name ! ” cried Vivian, growing excited, “ can nothing be done ? You are English sailors—I’ll do what I can, if I only knew the way.”

“ Bill ! ” said Davy, quietly, to his mate. “ Our big boat might do it. I wouldn’t be afraid to put her to it. We might coax her

along 'tween the piers. She's broad and bluff enough; but there's only three on us."

"Then I'll go too," said Vivian, growing more and more excited. "I could pull an oar with any man."

In a moment Vivian was explaining to the mayor what they were going to attempt. In a very few moments more nearly every one there knew that the brave Englishmen were going to do something—something, as the French there understood by instinct, that was very likely to succeed: for they had much confidence in the gifts of the wonderful islanders.

In another moment Davy and his mates were running to the *Nancy Baker*, had cast her off her dirty, clumsy, broad, but serviceable boat, and had paddled, still within shelter of the pier, to a ladder which led down to the water.

"Now, my hearties," cried Davy from his boat, "who'll volunteer? There's room for

two more." This was in his own tongue : but every one understood.

Vivian, standing at the top of the ladder, hurriedly repeated to the mayor what was wanted. The fishermen, the women, were all crowding on them, chatting, praying, pointing. The mayor turned to them, and began leisurely, and with a sort of dramatic gesture, to address them :

" Messieurs—"

But the Englishmen interrupt him bluntly—Davy with the oath of his country, and Vivian with :

" Encore deux places !" And he pointed below to the boat.

There was a death-like stillness, not a motion or a sound.

" You are brave Frenchmen ! We are four English about to try and save your countrymen. We cannot do it alone. You will help us, I know ? "

There was another pause, a fresh stillness.

“Cowards!” said Davy from the boat.
“I thought they were better men.”

“Then we go alone,” said Vivian, and turned to descend.

But they were not cowards. A dozen fishermen had rushed forward.

* * * *

Vivian felt a light hand on his arm, and looked round, astonished.

“*You* here!” he cried.

A gentle face, its veil blown about by the gale, was looking up into his. It was pale and wistful.

“I would not stop you. Not for the whole world! It is indeed noble of you! I heard it all. God will watch over you and protect you.”

“Ah,” said Vivian, “if you were to know how happy and confident I *now* feel! We shall do better now that you are looking on. *Now!* Come, friends, take your places. Davy, you pull stroke. I sit next you. You direct us.”

Was it not like a blissful ray of the sun, and a sudden lulling of the winds and waves, as the hapless figures on the wreck saw the little black speck emerge swiftly from the piers? But how many perils were before them! what chances! for all the cruel imps of death were between them, floating like sharks.

Lucy, her hands all but clenched together, and, indeed, not so much thinking of her friend as of the superb devotion and splendid sacrifice of the whole, stood following them with her eyes, and a little gasp on her lips every time they sank down in the waves. Turning round for a minute, she found herself all but alone; for the whole crowd was on its knees apart, at the feet of the great crucifix. With a swift flutter she had joined them, and poured out her little soul in the most passionate entreaties. Even Captain Filby was heard to say, later: "Begad, sir! I took off my hat and prayed with the rest, like a trooper!"

Some one gave a cry, and they were all on their feet again. The boat had been struck, as if by the fin of a whale, by a huge wave, and had filled. Here was an oar gone; one of the Frenchmen beaten nearly senseless; Davy waving his arms, the others stooping and trying to bale out the water.

Again are the wistful faces and stooped figures bent forward. "They are lost! O mon Dieu! they will never accomplish it." They are at work again, now going forward a foot, now beaten back a dozen yards, whilst Davy, who has become coxswain, watched to give notice of the coming waves. They were not taking the direct course for the wreck. Again were there cries, "They will miss her; they will be carried out to sea; they have lost control." But an old French salt saw what Davy's plan was—to get to leeward of the wreck. At last, after about an hour's hard work, they succeeded.

It had grown dark, lanterns were brought down; but the spectacle was one of such

absorbing interest that, had it lasted till midnight, the lookers-on could never have tired. The *Phare*, faithless and theatrical guide, was blazing away, as if to mock the poor lost victims.

As the heavy boat was carried within a few yards of the wreck, they were called on to throw themselves into the water, and were thence dragged out by hair, or hand, or any way. Three were lost, but five got safely into the boat. It was so dark, those on shore could not tell what was going on, and indeed presently lost sight of boat and all. Then agitation rose. But they had to wait an hour more for the return. And oh ! when there was a rush of lanterns to the pier, and the clumsy craft, crowded with figures, came suddenly out of the darkness, and swept by on the top of a great green wave like a hill, actually on a level with the top of the pier, a shout was raised that reached to the back streets of the town. Brave, rare, gallant English sailors ! Though

a thousand stupid things be associated with the English abroad, a thousand such heroic deeds as this have redeemed them.

If there were prayers and gesticulations before, what was there now, as the noble fellows, drenched and beaten out of all human shape, staggered up? But the two who came last had to drag up an insensible figure, the slightest and tallest. A girl in a black silk dress, pale with cold, terror, and anxiety, stooping forward in the crowd, as he was laid on the ground, saw that it was what she dreaded, and gave a cry of despair and agony. "The poor child," said a tender-hearted fishwife; "it is her sweet-heart! But, my God! what is that to those who have lost brothers, fathers, and husbands on this terrible night?"

CHAPTER II.

THE CONVALESCENT.

ONLY a short time after Mr. West had gone over to England, there was a picture to see, in Mr. Blacker and Mrs. Dalrymple discussing the newest scandal.

“ My dear ma’am,” Mr. Blacker was saying, holding up his usual glass of English wine to the light, and his head bent close to hers, “ such a business! They’re all talking of it. That poor foolish thing, Mrs. Wilkinson! Her doings are really gone past charity.”

“ Ah ! ” said Mrs. Dalrymple, “ I was

afraid of that all along, Mr. Blacker—ever since that night of our little party."

"I can't tell you how grieved I am. Really, Ernest Beaufort is as nice and gentlemanly a fellow as you'd meet, and I am sorry to see him going on that way."

"Tell me about it, Mr. Blacker, do!"

"Why, you see, the man's in there, morning, noon, and night. Wilkinson, though the best creature in the world, has no sense—absolutely no head."

Things were indeed beginning to be pretty much as Mr. Blacker had described. Young Mrs. Wilkinson had come from a country parish, unsophisticated, with a rustic consciousness of her own charms. The homage she received here, at Dieppe, was even agreeable to her husband, and so new to them both, that it dazzled them into a sense of having been quite thrown away at home. Lucy had come to know Mrs. Wilkinson intimately, and, with that enthusiasm in friendship which belongs to

young girls, saw nothing but perfection in her. When that well-meaning person, Mrs. Dalrymple, took counsel with Mr. Blacker, she gave Lucy a little warning on the matter, but was met by a vehement defence and an agitated defiance. It was ungenerous, unkind, she said, and it would not have the least effect on her. It was indeed only to be expected from the mean, miserable creatures of the place, whose only occupation was coining slanders. As papa said, this food was the only thing that kept them alive. Not a little scared at this reception, the honest lady went her way, and Lucy henceforward seemed ostentatiously to challenge the looks and whispers of the “canaille” who colonised the place, by appearing a great deal on the Prado, and seeing the packet come in—a spectacle she detested—always beside Mr. Wilkinson’s wife, and in company of that brilliant cavalier, Mr. Ernest Beaufort, whom she disliked even more. “Lulu, the

dear girl," her father would say fondly, "is always impulsive; her character is developing every hour. But she's loyal to her own cloth, and true blue, Sir."

Meanwhile, other more personal matters were engaging her attention. Since the great dramatic scene of the wreck, a cloud of romance had hung about her. Days and hours went by in a sort of delightful agitation. The brave deliverer, Colonel Vivian, had been brought home, as we have seen, insensible—dangerously hurt, beaten almost out of life by the waves—and for a short time it was doubtful whether he could be brought through. It was Miss Lucy herself who had flown to fetch the nearest physician, Dr. White. Fortunately for himself, he was at home, having his hair dressed by a *friseur* of reputation, and who thus secured a retainer for a most lucrative "job."

This was only "poor Macan's old luck," who lived far off, in the cheap quarter. Lucy, who knew his case, and privately

compassionated his struggles, the swarming children, and the rest, would have infinitely preferred to have brought *him*. But what could she do? Time was precious—moments golden. In a place like this, the distribution of medical practice became like a step of political promotion. The question was asked and answered, “Who was attending the colonel?” We should have heard the exasperated answer of Dr. Macan himself: “Yes, sir, it was all done, sir, and arranged beforehand, and plotted between White, and that man, Dacres, and his daughter. What would you say to one of *your* daughters running wild through the town, to fetch her friend—without a bonnet, too, I’m told? And all for one of these free military men, that have hacked about from garrison to garrison! It’s disgraceful and scandalous, even in this scandalous place. That fellow, Jacks, his landlord, tells me she sits up there half the day, and some of the night too, smoothing his pillow, and all that

humbug. We know what *that* will mean one of these fine mornings. It's disgraceful and discreditable!"

"Ah, ah! poor Mac," says Captain Filby, chuckling, "it falls cruelly on you. Let us, one and all, devoutly pray that White may not get his fees; though one of the lies of this lying place is, that Vivian has, or will have, a good two or three thousand a year. My good Mac, didn't you learn in your own country, that girls won't stick at a trifles, for *that*? And I tell you, my friend, with the care of a man in that state—'I'll only take my medicine from *your* hand; 'When the damps are on my brow, a ministering angel thou'—and all that flummery, he gets soft, and tender, and weak. If she's worth a pinch of salt, she'll land him easy."

"And by what arts?" asked the doctor, vehemently. "It's a conspiracy between her, and that fellow White. I should blush, sir, for one of my own daughters. If it was to get ten times two thousand a year——"

“Folly, Mac. *We* know about that. The dear girl, Lulu, is on the right side of the hedge, where you’d wish one of your own sweet ones to be. What difference does a story or two make? The scandal-mongers here may talk, provided the curtain comes down well at last, on the village church and the parson.”

That even the name of the innocent Lulu, as pure and gentle a nature as ever came into this world, should be thus sullied, seemed shocking; but the license of the place spared nothing, and was all the more directly challenged by a view of simplicity and nature, which, it considered, had no proper place among them. Doctor Macan, inflamed by the length of Vivian’s illness, moodily poured out fresh griefs, and fresh slanders, to every one who would listen to him: “Nice business that, eh?—a young girl of eighteen waiting on an officer, and sitting all alone by his bedside. It’s a scandal and a shame! I’d like to see one

of my own daughters, &c.” (This was strict truth, as Captain Filby said. “Nothing he would have liked better!”)

The picture, it must be owned, was not a bit overdrawn. Lucy—the sick man’s lodging being only at the other side of the street—was always fluttering across. She considered it a sacred duty to be in attendance. Even the young landlady and her husband, having the deepest sympathy, thought of their own love and difficulty, and prayed that Lucy’s care of Vivian might be rewarded. Two such tender hearts, two such handsome figures, were surely made for each other. He was made for her: she for him. *He must*, if he had the soul of honour—which he had surely—on his recovery, lay all at her feet.

No vestige of such a thought found its way into Lucy’s head. She was doing a glorious duty, for the sake of one who, she had a conviction in her heart of hearts, had suffered cruelly from some unknown perse-

cution. Her father—now gloomy, now in absurdly high spirits—looked on passively, and smiled. “The dear girl! Impulsive, sir, but full of character! The poor traveller opposite fell among thieves, those thieves of the world. Oh, sir, the waves that break upon the shore! A grand spectacle. Tum tum ti. Full of glorious impulses, that child! There, she trots off, over the way, to that fine fellow who imperilled *his* life to *save* life, sits by him, reads to him, smoothes his crumpled pillow. There it is; we know the value of women *then*, though, God knows, we treat ‘em cavalierly enough, when we have health, and wealth, and strength.” This remark Mr. Dacres made in a personally reproachful way to a friend; though no one realized its truth better than he did himself, in reference to the invalid Mrs. Dacres.

The quick-eyed reader will see to what things are tending. The colonel was recovering slowly, and presently sitting up in

his little saloon, Dr. White infinitely satisfied with the progress made ; having falsified the dark prophecy made by Doctor Macan : “Mark my words ! that fellow won’t stick at manslaughter, if it suits his plans.” Towards Doctor White, Lucy felt much kindness and gratitude, and spoke, in her impulsive way, and everywhere, of his great cleverness. It was a pity discretion had not been one of the extras taught at Miss Pringle’s establishment. Lucy had cleverness, wit, tenderness, softness, affection ; but she was thought to want this most precious of all qualities. Yet her behaviour was natural. She knew she was on a stage, as it were, before a set of free habitués in the pit, with their opera-glasses to their eyes. She despised them heartily, and wished, by a perverseness, that she could show them how she despised them and their whispers, and the reports, about *this* matter, that now began to reach her. It only made her more loyal than ever to her friend.

CHAPTER III.

CLEVER MR. DEMPSEY.

ONE day a letter in strange writing came to her. She knew every letter that reached her, from its outside. She wondered. It was a Dieppe letter. She opened it and found it was full of verses. For a second she thought—a delightful idea; but it was not his hand. The tone of the verses, which made her colour and her ripe lip curl, soon settled *that*. It was entitled:—

THE GOOD-LOOKING COLONEL.

1.

Ah ! not long ago, there came to this town,
A gent and his daughter, of fairest renown.
To love, her your heart was all quite external,
For she had not yet seen the good-looking Colonel.

2.

They did not belong to the sect of the Quakers ;
Their name—yes, in truth—it was something like
D—cr—a.

A nice little girl, and her good looks supernal
Transfixed a grave man, *not* a good-looking Colonel.

3.

The grave man delighted, now hoped for the best,
From the north and the south, though his name it was
W—st.

She smiled, and she laughed, on the grave man diurnal,
Till one day arrived here the good-looking Colonel !

4.

He hurt himself, saving the Frenchman from drowning ;
Such service deserves, surely, glorious crowning !
She sat by his bed, from the room she would turn all ;
Oh, who would not be this good-looking Colonel !

5.

And how it will end, there is no one can tell ;
If he *pop*, well and good—if he don't, very well.
For the grave-looking one how sad and infernal,
To be jilted like this, for a good-looking Colonel.

This sprightly effusion, written with all
the elegance and good metre of such produc-
tions, was long considered the *chef d'œuvre* of
witty young Dempsey. Every one, of course,

knew it was his, though, of course, he would not acknowledge it—the wit pointed to him, and to him alone. The young girls of the place took copies. Some had it by heart, and one set it to the music of “Derry Down,” so that a chorus could be brought in at the end, after the words, “good-looking Colonel.” Young Dempsey’s reputation became so high that he was always spoken of as “**QUITE AN AUTHOR.**”

Lucy’s eyes flashed, and her cheeks blazed, as she read this doggrel. She crumpled it up, flung it into the grate, and, with a proud independence, crossed over at once, and went in to see her patient. She wished the whole colony of the recreant, malicious creatures, who stabbed in the dark, could be drawn up in two lines to see her cross, and go in—she despised them so heartily. Vivian was growing stronger every hour. She entered. With him, as we may conceive, it was nearly the same as with er.

Yet she was a little surprised, and sometimes pained, by the sorrowful and disturbed way, in which he would look at her, and the cold restraint and embarrassment that he would sometimes assume. She would have been under the impression that she had offended him, and went away grieved. After such a departure, "Jacks" and his little wife would hear him pacing about overhead, with wonder; for they did not dream he had strength for such a thing. When she came again, he would be all tenderness and grateful sweetness—a perfect Bayard, as he seemed to her. With her, indeed, the whole stages of it went on smoothly enough, and as a matter of course: to him she could not guess what a struggle it brought.

When she entered, on this day of the anonymous letter, she saw that gloom and embarrassment was over him, and, after some hesitation, he said to her:

"My dear Miss Lulu, if I may call you

so, I am now nearly well—in fact, well; and I can only say, if I was to have been attended by Doctor White *alone*, I should never have got through. If I dared to speak all I feel in the way of the deepest gratitude——”

“Gratitude,” said Lucy, impetuously, “for what? Coming across the street? It was a pleasure to me—the greatest delight. And, though I felt, and we *all* felt, for what you suffered, still I must say, it will long be for me, *such* a happy time to look back to.”

“A very happy time,” he repeated, hurriedly, “though I felt pain. But that is what I have been trying to shut my eyes to all this time, hoping that all this would merely fall into the shape of a common convalescence, or perhaps—which might have been the best solution—things might have taken another turn, and settled all for me in the most satisfactory way. But now, Miss Lucy, you won’t think me ungrateful

if I say I must go away, and, if at once, all the better. I ought not to have stayed here—and should never have come here!"

Lucy looked at him with a face in which wonder and pain were compounded. "Why should you say this?" she asked. "Have we offended you? Go away! I thought you were to stay months; Oh! and poor Jaques——"

He smiled. "Poor Jaques would not be the difficulty. Offended me? No! Alas! very far from that! But it is better, and I have thought it over deeply, anxiously, and miserably—it is better I should get away with all speed. As it is, I have suffered, and shall suffer, for coming——"

Suddenly it flashed on her. Her little heroic look came into her face. She spoke with a mixture of enthusiasm and scorn, "with quite a touch of Joan of Arc," as her father once said of her.

"I know—I know it all, now. It is some of this wretched talk. These stories:

they have been sending you *these* papers ! It is base and contemptible, and those who are really pure and innocent, can despise them. If it be only *that*, you must not go away. We are now only beginning to know you. Stay, to oblige me ; and," here her lip curled, "if only to show the creatures round us, how heartily we loathe and despise them."

Who can argue with a bit of nature like this ? Such defiance is irresistible. What could the patient do but sigh, look at her with smiling admiration, and yield ? Still, she could not help noticing, that he was growing more dejected, and Jaques' wife came to tell her she feared the poor brave gentleman had some sore trouble on his mind, for he looked so worn and fatigued ; "and," she added, with mystery, "always walking—walking about his room ! Oh, miss, he has some little sweet pain (*douleur*) at his heart, and I *think* I can guess." So she could ; for she was an expert, and

this little insinuation was exquisitely welcome, bringing a faint colour into Lucy's cheeks. From these premises we may conceive how things were hurrying forward, on the immemorial principles; and though Lucy was pained at times by a return of the colonel's curious doubts, still it became plain to the whole town what was going on.

Mr. Dacres had seen it from the first, "with half an eye," to use his favourite expression. He gave the dear girl "the reins on her neck;" for, as he assured his friends, "nature—nature, sir, with her unerring instinct, will guide her straight." He looked on, smiling, and secretly approved of the whole. "Let Lulu chalk out her own little course. God forbid I should put stay, let, or impediment in the way of my child's happiness." He, indeed, infinitely preferred this new arrangement; for he had, himself, fallen into the habit of going over and sitting with his friend, cheering him up, by telling him some of

his best circuit stories, which the other did not in the least care for, and talking with fatherly rapture over the perfections of Lulu, which was more welcome.

“ She’d put her hands under my feet, sir, that girl. Very curious, she is, in her little way. I would no more attempt to control her than I would—that poker. Yet she’d do anything for me and for poor mamma. She treats me like a brother. It’s Harco here, and Harco there ! Only last week I said I couldn’t have her running wild, in and out in this way—troubling you in this sort of way when a man wants to get well, you know. Well, sir, I might as well have spoken to that ormolu pendule. ‘ What,’ says she, ‘ Harco, give up the only little treat I have in the day—the only gleam of sunshine in this gloomy place—the little holiday hour I look forward to ? I can’t, indeed, Harco ! ’ ”

Mr. Dacres had made some inquiries about Colonel Vivian, found that he was a man of property, and in command of a regiment

out at Gibraltar; in short, discovered that the colonel's account of himself was borne out *by collateral evidence*—a state of things always to any one's credit, in the colony. The protracted absence of West offended him. It was nice work, slipping away in that fashion—no letters—no excuses! What was the fellow about? And he dwelt long on this as a grievance. Then he would come back to his Lulu.

“I don't know what's over her. There's a restlessness—a disinclination to meet her father's eye. The child has something on her mind, and she won't tell. But I'll find out. Yet you know, my dear colonel, there's a delicacy in these things—to be probing the heart of your own child—to be sitting like a coroner, and taking evidence. No, I can't do it, though other fathers may.”

After such an interview, Colonel Vivian would be heard tramping up and down, and any inquisitive maid, at the door, would have

heard him say, almost in an agony, “I *must* go—I dare not remain here !”

But he did remain, and grew stronger, to go out into the fresh air, and appear on the Corso, to the triumph of our Lucy, who was proud of her share in that recovery, and heard, with a thrill, the whisper, “There he is !” For the gallant rescue was still talked about.

C H A P T E R I V.

DR. WHITE'S ENMITY.

IN a place like the colony, small figures and small offices magnified into a surprising importance. The affair of the unhappy Doctor Macan and his rivalry with, or rather defeat by, the new and more popular doctor was, to use Captain Filby's favourite expression, "as good as a play." That last unhappy practitioner was every day falling; he soon "wouldn't have bread and cheese for his brats," added Captain Filby.

The rise of Doctor White was curious. He had come there in an obscure way, which should not certainly be remarked on, as so many chose that fashion of coming. A few had noticed him. He was good looking, and had as "good address." The two or three who had spoken to him never knew that he belonged to the profession, until one day Lady Pilpay, going on to Paris, and taken with the vapours, or the remains of sea-sickness up at the "Royle," sent Le Bœuf himself off distractedly to fetch Dr. Macan. It was late in the evening, and that unhappy man, at that unhappy hour, was actually sitting with a newly-married compatriot, *who had money*, over some rich and real Irish native spirit. Such a treat he had not had for years. Its delicious fumes brought him back to the old country, and the sweet "county Cark," and to Dr. Brennan's "beyan't Blarney." There were two tumblers, then three, then four; and then the messenger from his own

house, sent in by the agitated "missus," surprised him.

" Faith, and I've no notion of stirring, tell her," said the doctor. " Not I ! "

" Bring a little *file* with you, Mary darling," said his friend, comically, " and we'll fill it for her ladyship. It's the best medicine she could take."

Le Bœuf posted away to a well-known café, where he knew he was certain of meeting the French doctors, though, indeed, he knew he was committing a blunder. Still, the Frenchman would prescribe *rest*—rest at the Hôtel Royal. Just as he reached the café, he was touched on the arm.

" I hear you were looking for the English doctor," said a young man of good address, " and that you could not find him. I am in the profession, and if I could be of use——"

Le Bœuf looked at him. He was well dressed, though a little *hungry* looking, and had a good manner.

"I have only been here a short time," said the young man, answering an objection he saw in the other's face.

Le Bœuf said it would do, and took him off. The hungry look still struck him, and, as he entered the hotel, he turned and said :

"She is not very ill. I think all she wants is to repose herself for a few days."

"Thank you for the hint," said the other. "Often unprofessional people see more of the *real* nature of a malady than some of us."

He was introduced to Lady Pilpay's room—a fat dowager, with a "companion," and a corpulent testy King Charles—that breed was then in fashion, and considered in the haute école of canine fancy—slumbering in an arm-chair. Her ladyship herself was lying on the sofa. She was pleased with the look of the young man. In Furbelow's mart, at home, she liked to be "served" by good-looking young

men, and often said to some of the young ladies of that house, " Go away, child; I am tired of your awkward fingers. Tell them to send me Mr. Jackson." And Mr. Jackson—a young gentleman with pale whiskers—would come bowing, and roll out his silks and ribbons in perfect billows, and was pleasantly rallied by his friends on this marked preference.

She was delighted with the skill and great talent of the new Dieppe doctor. He spoke so softly, and, when she had told her case, was so agreeable and pleasant in his remedies. It was curious that he should have been the only one that really hit off her complaint—that is, *agreed* with her, in what she believed to be her complaint. His prescription, too, was so agreeable—rest, perfect rest, for a few days.

" Yours is a precious life, Lady Pilpay; and you must not do too much."

This was very different from " that brute," Duncan Dennison, who had told her,

roughly, “There’s nothing the matter with you, ma’am, but *too much good beef*. A good breathing walk every morning is the physic for you.” Then Doctor White noticed the little King Charles buried in the arm-chair, was very delicate and interested about him, and promised to send him a “soothing powder,” later. He and Lady Pilpay were nearly three weeks at the Royal. By three weeks—nay, in three hours—he was a famous and *fashionable* doctor in Dieppe—a very agreeable young man, whom Lady Pilpay—then the only lady of quality in the place—thought more “clever” than Sir Duncan Dennison. Her cachet was everything. Poor, poor Doctor Macan!—that was a costly tumbler of punch for him.

It was long told, as a proof of the disinterested and handsome behaviour of the young man, that he had actually “insisted on calling in Macan.” *He* was the chief local practitioner. It was only common

courtesy, he said ; and it was not fair for a new comer, as *he* was. Macan came, breathing hard and hastily ; but Lady Pilpay, the moment almost she saw him, took an aversion to him. Here again ill luck pursued him ; for, in his conflict of emotions, he did not see the King Charles on the rug, and stumbled over that overfed brute, who shrieked, and snarled, and menaced, with pain and pettishness.

“A low whisky-drinking fellow, with no manners of his own ! Throw the windows open, Jane.”

Le Bœuf, too, was not ungrateful. A word from him went a long way ; and, by the time Lady Pilpay had to proceed with her journey, Doctor White’s reputation was made. Was it wonderful, then, that Colonel Vivian, the splendid—when that illness produced by his heroic deed came on—should be attended by this agreeable man, now, indeed, enjoying large practice ? He attended Mrs. Guernsey Beaufort ;

Dick, the consul; Penny, the English clergyman's wife, in her confinement; for in this department, too, he was not unskilful; and though the "little cherub"—Mrs. Penny's daughter—was taken from them, nothing reflected on the accoucheur; poor Penny's house being, to use Captain Filby's phrase, "like a dozen rabbit warrens." He came twice every day to Colonel Vivian's bedside. Vivian did not like him. The origin of this dislike—which became "a scandal" in the colony—was natural.

"He is quite harmless, I believe," he said, laughing, to Lucy; "and he seems to be very unsettled in his principles of medicine."

"Oh, but he is so clever, you know," said Lucy, with reverence. "And he has cured that old Lady Pilpay!"

"I don't know," said Vivian, "but he agrees with everything I say. I said, yesterday, I should like a glass of good Burgundy,

and would give the world for it. 'Well,' he said,—'Colonel Vivian'—and he is always ringing my name and title in a most disagreeable way—'Well, Colonel Vivian, I don't know but that you are right.' When he had gone away I remembered that he had said a few days ago that wine would be 'like prussic acid for me.' "

"Ah, yes," said the dear girl, eagerly. "Don't you *see*. That is the new system—whatever the patient likes or wishes for. He explained it all to us. 'That is nature,' he says, 'crying out.' Oh, he is very, very clever." Vivian laughed long, and loud, and merrily. "'But,' I said, 'if nature keeps crying out for opposite things? That poor Macan! I suspect he knows more—'"

"Yes," said Lucy, interrupting; "only he is so fond of that dreadful punch. Now, if he came here some day in *that* state, and made a mistake about medicine, oh, I should never forgive myself!"

Vivian looked at her with inexpressible interest and fondness. She was colouring.

“Very well,” he said, “that’s settled. We shan’t have him. Though, indeed, if a mistake was made with me——” and he sighed.

“Sighing, and low-spirited,” said she, eagerly. “Now you mustn’t give up to this; you promised me.”

They talked of a hundred things. Delightful mornings, these, for Lucy. Charming hours! It was like playing sweet music. These were the old hours she looked back to. “And you like them,” she went on, speaking of Madame Jacques. “Such a dear pair—I am so interested in them. And yet I am afraid, do you know,” she added, in her wistfully confidential way, which was one of her charms, “they are not doing so well. It is a dreadful place. And their landlord is very rapacious, you know.”

“Then their tenant must make it up to them,” said he, delighted to please her. “I

am really getting ashamed to be living at such a small charge. Next week, positively, I shall raise the rent myself. By the way, their maid,—I am not pleased with *her*. Perhaps I do her wrong; but somehow I have my strong suspicions."

"Of *WHAT?*" Lucy, showing in her face she was shocked.

"Oh, it is nothing, a few fancies, perhaps, now and again. But she is always hanging about after my papers, and, I *think*, a sort of ally of that dreadful doctor, whom I wish I was rid of—I do indeed!"

"Oh, how dreadful!" said Lucy, quite taken aback at this revelation. "Poor little Marie below, she is such a darling wife: you cannot imagine what an interest she has in you. She ran over to tell me she heard one of those long, long sighs as she passed the door, and that it went to her very heart. This *beau garçon!*—the handsome boy! that is—may I tell you," said Lucy, looking down, a little confused, "what she

always calls you?—the beau garçon, the handsome boy.”

“She is a good creature,” said Vivian, heartily laughing; “but her Jaques is much handsomer! If I cared for such things, Miss Lucy, I would change faces with him.”

“No, no!” burst out Lucy enthusiastically, and quite forgetting herself, then suffused with a glowing crimson, bathing her cheeks, and making her very neck tingle.

(“By Jove, sir!” would have said Captain Filby, had he been present, “there was the claret, meilleur cru, sir, streaming down, sir, from a broken decanter! ”)

“But,” said Lucy, spasmodically, and wishing to change the subject, “may I ask one question about all your sighing—*why do you do it?*”

Vivian raised himself on the sofa and looked at her with his air of smiling interest.

“Why?” he repeated gently.

"Ah! I see, you think me inquisitive," said Lucy, a little fretfully—"That it is no business of mine? Is not that what is in your mind?"

He shook his head gravely.

"Business of yours!" he repeated, sadly, "Indeed, you have a right to know anything you choose to name. But what do you think?—what would you guess? I often, when lying awake during these last long, long nights, have amused myself speculating about you, over at the other side of the street—what on earth you thought of me—what brought me here—why I staid on—who *am* I, in short? *What* am I? Does that ever occur to you as a matter of curiosity with you? Tell me. Do you know, there is nothing delights me more than to hear you talk, and tell me your thoughts openly and naturally. It does me good—more than anything Mr. White prescribes."

Lucy smiled, and settled herself cosily,

with great delight, to respond to this invitation.

(Her father always said she was "a child of nature, sir—a child of nature, sir—

Child of earth with—the gol-den hair—
that, sir—I mean nature—it makes the
whole world akin.

Give me the laughter-loving eye—
The sun that lights the—roses !

I heard Braham sing that, long, long ago ;
and I sang it myself, once on circuit when
Scarlett came down special.")

"Tell me all about it," said Lucy ; "if
you like, that is."

"No ; but I want you to guess," said
Vivian. "Would you make it out your-
self ? You have an idea yourself—I *know*
you have."

"Well, I have," said Lucy, in her cozy
manner still, and a low voice, "and I shall
tell you, if you won't be angry, why you
sigh so heavily."

"Now truth—truth, and some of that candour which is so charming in you."

"Because," said Lucy, hastily, "there is some one you like very much; and your father, who is a cold, stern man, will not hear of it, and will cut you off."

Vivian shook his head sadly. "I wish I had even a cold, stern man for a father. No; I am quite alone in the world. I have some relations, but they do not care for me. Why should they? I do not care for *them*. Some people tell me they are very much my friends. I know some honest soldiers—good fellows in their way—who would lend me hundreds if I ever wanted it, which I do not. They say that is the best test of friendship."

Lucy sighed, herself. She was thinking of her Harco at home—how few friends must *he* have!

"No," went on Vivian, "I am *quite* friendless. You would not believe me if I told you my story. You can understand,

dear girl as you are—I mean as your father always calls you—what a feeling that is to have at your heart, that no exertion, no kindness, no goodness from any one can mend your case or help you."

"But why not?" said Lucy, quickly, her soft eyes opening.

"Why not?" he repeated, vehemently. "Because—" Then he stopped. "And yet I do not set up to be one of your morbid disappointed men. I would be happy if I could—if I dare be so. I see you smiling at this tragedy. But there are things that happen—And *then*, you know, that other night, when those poor sailors were in such danger; then I confess I was a little in spirits—I forgot everything."

"What, in that dreadful scene?" said Lucy, covering her eyes.

"I did. But I talk a great deal of folly. Have I not life, health, money, everything to make me happy—*now*, that is? And I *have* been so happy of late, dearest Miss

Lucy. How shall I ever show my gratitude to *you*? When you come in, the sun, the light, warmth, everything seems to come in also. I cannot endure to look forward to getting *well*! *I am terribly afraid I am getting well too fast* :—not by the doctor's aid, but by yours. When I am well, what *am I* to do?"

Lucy looked at him with delight and pleasure.

"When you are well?" she said. "Why, we shall have all sorts of holidays, and be so happy going about. When the season comes on here, which I have never seen properly, and the fêtes begin——"

He rose up abruptly. "Ah! these things cannot be for me. I should not have even thought of them for a moment, even in a dream!" He had risen and was walking about. "You should not be here; nor coming to me in this way. It was foolish, cruel, wicked of me to suffer it! You, Miss Dacres, *you* cannot understand. You are

fresh from a school. How can you ask me to stay on here? I, a soldier, and with duties to look to—I have no business with things of this sort. I am well enough and strong enough to go away, and if I was a man, or had the heart of a man, I ought to fly from this place by to-night's packet!"

Poor Lucy was aghast at this burst, even terror-stricken.

"Oh," she said, unconsciously appealing to his mercy, "what have I done! Why do you speak to me in this way? Indeed, I mean no harm. Oh!" she went on, rising—"oh, then I must go away! I should not have come, indeed. What is to become of me?"

She was fluttering like a bird. He was at the window, and turned round. That handsome, olive face, brilliant as a Velasquez; one glance from it! He knew its power. The lines of vexation, the grief, had passed from it: it was full of another feeling. He was beside her in a moment, and had de-

tained her. The young girl was drawn to him. She could not help it.

"You must forgive me, I did not know what I was saying. I am fretted. What I said was not for you. Indeed, no! If you but knew all."

"Oh," said Lucy, half inclined to cry, "I was afraid you were going to be unkind, or to think I had done wrong. But," she added, starting, "you are right, *Colonel Vivian*. I should *not* come here. I am a school-girl, and know nothing of what should be done. Let me go, pray—let me leave this quickly."

Vivian drew back sadly. "Always my way—I offend those that I love the most. But it is better—better, too, that I should be wretched here, and that this sickness has come back on me."

"Not that I am angry," said Lucy anxiously, and looking full into his deep eyes; "you must not think *that*."

"Sit down then for a minute longer," he

said, seizing her hand again. "Listen to me, just for a moment, one moment. Do!"

He gently forced her into a seat.

"But what can you have to say?" said Lucy, growing a little agitated. "Oh, indeed, I ought not to stay."

"What I have to say?" repeated he. "What I *must* tell you now, no matter at what cost, that you are indeed, the dear girl, the *dearest*—"

Lucy saw him sinking down, almost to her feet. She was pale, fluttering, agitated; she knew not what was coming, yet she made no protest. It seemed to her afterwards, that that moment verged on paradise. But, a sudden sound at the door, not, strange to say, as of its being opened, but as of its being closed, broke the dream, and startled both. Next they heard a tap; the next moment the doctor entered. Vivian looked at him angrily.

"What is this? what do you want here?" he said sharply.

The other answered humbly, "I just dropped in, Colonel Vivian, to see how you were getting on."

"This is not the hour you appointed," said Vivian, still angry.

"I am sure I meant no harm," said the doctor, with great humility—"crawling," Vivian called it later. "I am sure, Colonel Vivian, I was only thinking of my duty. But I can come again later."

"Yes," said Vivian. "No—that is, I will send to you again when I want you."

"Don't think of it, Colonel Vivian," said he, smiling. "I can call, as I pass—any time—any time will do." And he disappeared.

The dream was past. Morning had broken. Lucy was standing up, flitting away. She could not stay an instant, and had fled as abruptly as the doctor. Madame Jaques was deeply concerned all that day, as she noticed the change in the hero she so admired—his ceaseless pacing, his restless

look. Oh, she was sure he was going to be ill again! But what was her feeling when he abruptly told her of his new plan, and, almost as if he was giving her warning that he must leave, announced that he intended paying them double the rent he had paid hitherto? Here was a prince, a hero, indeed!

But now, for the moment taking up the part of the chorus in the Greek play, it does seem that this state of things is scarcely satisfactory, and may lead to mischief or misery. No one need be *much* shocked at this young girl's proceedings. She was as innocent, as the pure snow itself. Her mother was a confirmed invalid, and was growing worse every day, while "poor Harco" was "no better than a bird of the air!" as he once said of himself—in the way of supervision. He left the "dear girl" to herself. He had his own little ways. She hadn't much harm in her. You might trust her from this to Temple Bar. As for

Vivian, he was as fine and true a man as ever God made—a real gentleman, that could go into any box in the kingdom, and look any judge in the face !

Again, too, we must consider the community. The little railings and fences which society sets up elsewhere, and watches very strictly, were here not thought of. It was too expensive a system of proceeding, and it is to be feared that there were but too many, who, in their own country, had broken through these slight barriers and come to disgrace, to wish to set them up here. A handsome young officer, with a Velasquez face, an invalid, a hero, with a young, fresh, and innocent girl, with only the width of a street between them, we can hardly blame the “good people” if they shook their heads a good deal.

CHAPTER V.

VIVIAN SUSPECTS ELISE.

LUCY thought this scene had been the opening of a new romance. The grand mystery of the sealed book was from that day laid open to her. She began to live for a purpose. When she got back,—indeed, and she had flown to her room “to think it all over,”—she was at first deeply moved, even a little indignant. “What have I done that he should treat me in that way? *Such* a reproach! *Such* an unkind reproach! I only meant to show

him that I liked him ; and it was so cruel, so unkind, to turn on me in that way ! ” She thought over this a long, long time. And then it occurred to her to think, why —why should he have changed so, all of a sudden ? She could not shut out the last vision of her hero, so gentle, so gracious, so soft, and noble, so anxious to repair that impetuous burst. But still why ?

In this state of doubt and misery, as it seemed to her, a bright face appeared at her door. It was the face of Madame Jaques, radiant and joyous. She almost rushed in ; for they felt to each other like two girls.

“ Joy ! joy ! ” she cried. “ Such news, mademoiselle ! He is indeed a hero ! Jaques has even stopped his cutting wood, and says we can now enjoy ourselves, and has promised that we shall go to the fair together, that is coming on.”

Lucy dismissed her own sorrows, and sympathised.

“ I know,” she said. “ He told me. And I am so glad—for you, that is——”

“ But the poor *beau garçon* himself,” she said, clasping her hands. “ He will be ill again. There he goes, pacing, pacing, pacing, these two hours. And when he told me that, he looked worn and harassed. Ah, *Mademoiselle Lucy*. Don’t tell me ! I know the way *Jaques* used to go on—precisely the same—pace, pace, pace ; furious, like *Belcour* at the theatre. He could act as well as *Belcour*. Ah, I am so desolated. For there has been a falling out, and, oh ! if you would only be friends again, it would so console him ; otherwise he will have a troubled night before him.”

“ But he did not tell you all this, *Marie* ? Surely not ?” asked *Lucy*, in a flutter.

“ No, no, no ; I should not have ventured. But I guess—I know.” And she closed the door mysteriously. “ *Jaques* and I went through all this—every bit of it. *Je tiens*

le mot. It is in the order. It *must* come in matters of this kind."

"What?" asked Lucy, in amazement. She had great confidence in the wisdom and knowledge of her friend, who had already passed through the fire.

"I could explain all. *There is another*, mademoiselle, do you not see? He is bound—bound by his word; bound *in honour*. *There is* the struggle!"

"Ah!" cried Lucy. The light had poured in on her of a sudden.

"Yes, Jaques says so. And I say so. Any one that knows anything of these things *must* say so. A marriage of convenience—his father and mother force him—"

"He has no father or mother," said Lucy gently, taking these lights out of the picture.

"The young lady idolises him; that is only natural, and no fault of hers. He is a man of honour." Madame Jaques drew

herself up, as she had seen the ladies on the stage do. "He respects his words. He has long since ceased to care for her. He now idolises another."

This sketch actually brought some conviction home to Lucy. It seemed clear ; it explained everything. It was a flood of light. All that he had done became not only excusable, but natural, and what he *should* have done. The bright twinklings of relief and happiness sparkled in her eyes. She could not conceal her joy. She was conscious of this, and the blushes again spread in a current all over her cheeks and neck. The expert who had so skilfully treated the case looked on with pride and affection.

Such was the position of things. That place and its society must have been supermortal not to have had its whispers and "stories." What did Lucy care ? What did Vivian care ? He had been quartered in fifty hotbeds of gossip—the garrison

towns of the United Kingdom. Lucy was happy—happy as a child when the pantomime transformation scene sets in—and now overflowing with joy, since she had also brought the comfort to her friend.

The servant of whom Vivian had spoken was a strange character, with such an ugly face, “like a walnut-tree root”—tall, gaunt—a Swiss, and a curious way of speaking or receiving an order or instruction—which was, after a short pause, to “blurt out” a kind of harsh remonstrance. This, however, had no effect on her conduct; for little madame believed she would do anything, and that Elise was the most faithful creature in the world. Elise’s face, indeed, more than once had been likened to the solemn intelligence of a Newfoundland dog’s. Vivian, from the very beginning, had not relished her abrupt manner, her pauses, and her hoarse voice, which he took for signs of “ill condition.” She made him uncomfortable. He little dreamed of the

“Friday”-like regard which that poor servant entertained for him, and that her bluntness was but the hesitation, and perhaps confusion, from wishing to find some way of showing her eagerness and goodwill. There are plenty of these trusty terriers in the world, and who, like the real animal, follow at the heel, looking up wistfully, more than repaid by a pat on the head or a stray “good dog!”

Madame Jaques was much surprised, not long after Lucy’s visit, to receive a request from Vivian to come and speak to him. This agitated her not a little, and, with her husband’s perfect approbation—he was rather pleased at her interest—she flew to settle her cap, get a new ribbon, &c. For a handsome brilliant-looking man, it is wonderful what “return” he receives for that investment—a hundred little offices, smiles, obsequiousness. He is my lord, the caliph, the sultan. For him, these fair Circassians will do anything. In his absence

they are his fast friends and “backers;” in his presence, his dependants and flatterers. He must not be quite penniless, or he verges on the good-looking Pauper—the genteel jeune homme pauvre. Let him be a gentleman and in good company, and he has a fairer chance than many a wealthy or titled “spark.”

Madame was greatly confounded when she learned the nature of the business. Vivian told her, with a smiling graciousness which seemed almost spiritual, that he had a request to make. He was her tenant, and he was sure she would do it. The fact was, he did not like their servant, Elise; and he would be very glad if she got another.

“Poor Elise!” cried madam. “And why, monsieur? and what has she done? And she is so attached to us!”

“I can’t help *that*,” said Vivian, firmly. “But I have reasons. I dare say you would not like to lose me, and I should not like to leave myself. But I am afraid——”

This handsome fellow had his eyes so fixed on Lucy, that he had not noticed the devotion of the others. And so he spoke what a French woman would have called "brutally."

"But what reason? What has Elise done? If you would only tell me—" said madame, supplicatingly.

"I shall not tell even you, madame," said Vivian, bluntly. "But I must beg you will do what I ask."

Madame retired sorrowfully. Such an incident in a little household is like an earthquake. To Jaques himself it seemed yet more astounding. The servant Elise soon knew the doom that was impending. The French husband and wife were much embarrassed as to how they would communicate this dreadful news. But the wooden face was not stirred; the Newfoundland expression not altered.

"Very well," she said; "with all my heart."

She went up to Vivian, and, with a sort of discomfort ; he felt the solemn, sad, unfamiliar expression on him with a deep reproach that made him uneasy.

“ Only tell me this, my colonel,” she said—“ what have I done ? Why do you have me turned away ?—for I know Madame Jaques would not do it.”

“ I cannot tell you,” said Vivian, shortly. “ But I have reasons ; you would not like to know them, perhaps. I may be mistaken, too : but I do not wish you to stay. And it is better for yourself, too, you should go. Say it is my whim. It can do no harm.”

She looked at him again with wonder, then retired without a word—do no harm !

Jaques and his wife held many councils over their little stove on this strange business. Elise gathered together her slender “ kit,” and was gone that very night.

Vivian had many reasons for this step, she did not suspect. One was—and the

chief one—what he had hinted to Lucy; another was, he suspected she was a friend of the Doctor White whom he had begun to dislike. He was sure that *she* had brought the doctor up at that interrupted scene with Lucy. He suspected, too, that she disliked Lucy, and was not willing “to let her in.” Above all, the plain features of this poor faithful ogre were a standing disturbance; and her solemn Newfoundland stare made him uncomfortable. He was much relieved when he heard of her departure. A bright cheerful girl had been secured in her place, who in two days also became hopelessly fascinated by the Velasquez charms of the handsome English officer.

The discovery of defalcations he did not mind so much, thinking that servants were duly chartered in such things, and that it was a mere matter of defence and attack.

This trifling incident has been thus dwelt upon as it is to have some important consequences.

C H A P T E R VI.

THE OLD HOME.

M^{R.} WEST, far away in England, read the account of the terrible storm at Dieppe, which later, indeed, travelled up some of the finest parts of the French country, unroofing houses, scattering produce, swelling rivers, and doing other mischief. All this, with the details of the gallant rescue, was duly set out in the vivacious *Galignani*—most pleasant of caterers, unwearyed in his effort to find variety,—and duly posted by Miss West. He wondered who this Colonel Vivian was, who sustained the English name with such heroism, and

who was suffering from dangerous bruises, having been dashed out of the boat against a spar ; and for a time, as he turned over the various names of the place, it occurred to him that it might be the handsome stranger he had met as he came away. The uneasiness was but for a moment. Had he seen the French paper, the *Gazette*, he would have been amused by an account from quite a different point of view. For, characteristically, after the first official sympathy and congratulation, and the mayor had personally paid his compliments to John Davy and his companions, popular feeling seemed to incline altogether to the two Frenchmen who had assisted, and the whole matter became only one more instance of the “ gloire du peuple Français.” This was the stuff with which her marine was to be filled, with very faint allusion to the collaboration of John Davi et de M. Vivienne (named, of course, after the well-known street in Paris), “ qui se comporta avec une

admirable fermeté et un phlegme vraiment Britannique." Decorations presently arrived for the two brave French heroes ; but "Jean Davi" and his friends were suffered to depart in their collier without any recognition beyond a few compliments and a little money.

Mr. West stayed in London a few days, where he had not been for some years. He went about with fresh curiosity, admiring the changes that had taken place in his absence. Some feeling like "What a charming world, what a pretty one, and what curious things are to be seen in it!" rose in his mind. Hitherto he had passed all these things by. He was now awakening as from a dream. The first thing he determined on, was to go down to Westtown, and see the old place.

Westtown was in the pleasant county of Hertfordshire, among the stately woods which spread out towards Stevenage. It was a little estate, with a modest red brick

house of about a hundred years old, but of an older pattern.

He had not been there since he was eighteen or twenty. It seemed to him double the time—an age ago; a miserable era of convulsion and gloom, as though he had been in a jail for some crime, and from which he had always kept his eyes turned away. Yet, as he came back now, he had no such feelings. He had given no notice of his coming, went down by coach, was “dropped” at an inn which he well knew, and where he took a chaise on to West-town.

He reached it about six o’clock in the evening, and drew up at the gateway, which seemed the entrance to some old churchyard; so wild and rank was it in the fulness of moss and ivy, and every straggling luxuriance which overgrew it. The rusty gate, whose hinge had worn away, hung all awry. No one came to open it; so he got down, and, with the driver’s aid, lifted it

back, then walked up the avenue slowly. It might have been a path through the fields, and was almost indistinguishable. Then he came on the house itself, compact, low, and of that cheerful kindly red, the tone of which is now as much lost to us, as the Sèvres blue. It, too, was all overgrown with a wild greenery, lank and drooping, from among which, however, the patches of cheerful colour peeped out brightly, like a young girl's healthy cheek from under a veil. No wonder it was so abundant; it was nearly a twenty year's growth, unrestricted and unchecked.

An old man opened the door, and looked out at him with impatience and doubt. "What do you want?" he said. "The family don't stop here, and never will; and —it's not to be let."

"Why, don't you remember me, Wilkes?" said Mr. West, gently.

The old man peered again, started, and then said, slowly and hesitatingly, "What

you, Master Gilbert ?" He did not go into the rapture which is, alas ! like so many other things, conventional. The weeping, and covering hands with kisses, of old servants, has passed out. Perhaps this member of the community received "the old master" with misgivings. His pleasant tenure, and long rule, was now to be disturbed. He had his family there, kept up part of the garden, sold the fruit, and did very well indeed. Old servants, indeed ! The inconvenient side of that relation has been often dwelt on, as almost comic; now *we* have become the old servants, and are ungrateful and thankless to them, for all their kindness while they stayed with us.

Old Wilkes, however, was a good soul. There was a fire burning in the study. "Well, Mr. Gilbert," he said that night, when he had come up to gossip a little, "I mind this room nigh twenty year ago, on

that night when the master, poor man, heard tell of you, and the curate's little daughter, and sent me out to look for you, and bring you in here."

"I remember it, Wilkes," said West, looking steadily in the fire, "and it has risen before me often since. It was a terrible night."

He sat pensively, looking at the picture before him; and yet in Dieppe, when in the little French rooms, when the scene came back on him, his sister had seen him rise abruptly, and almost rush away to walk. If it would *not* leave him, he might fly from it. She always knew what this meant. There was a change now. That was all before the delightful spell had begun to work.

"It was a sin and a shame, and I told him so," said the old servant. "It was no use, and it had gone past curing. Better have married her, though she were a poor curate's daughter, than—"

“Than have her die so miserably, Wilkes,” he said.

“You might have done it, Mr. Gilbert, I often thought since. The old master was quick-tempered, but he’d have got over it in a year or two——”

“No, never, never, Wilkes,” said West, getting up to walk about. “I knew him too well. He swore to me, on that old Bible which he was always reading, that if I went on with it, he would make it his life’s work to hunt her and her father to the death ; and he *could* do it, you know. You remember that poor Holden, his tenant ?”

“Ay, sir ; he worked *him* well enough.”

“I thought it for the best. I meant well, though I know what people said—that I gave her up, to save my estate.”

“Ay, they said *that*, sure enough.”

“I was sure they did. Yet I was innocent, Wilkes ; but I suffered for it. Eighteen years was a long atonement.”

“ So it were ; so it were.”

“ And if I had only waited, or gained a little time—just four years more, when he died——”

“ Well, yes,” said the old man, “ I’m after thinking, too, wouldn’t she have been living to this moment, but for that ? Well, you see that it’s a long time after all ; givin up your whole life, Mr. Gilbert, in these furrin parts to repentance. Ah, the poor old place ; it will never have the family in it again. And, indeed, so best, so best ; for now it’s not fit, and it’s a scandal, so it is, the way it’s in ! ”

West turned to look at him, smiling. “ Well, Wilkes, my old friend, I have some news for you. There has been enough of misery and melancholy, and I see no use in going on with that. Eighteen years is long enough, surely ; and if we were to die a thousand times, we can’t mend what is past. I begin to think we can show grief and feeling better by doing our duties, than by

moping, and pining, and idling. So do you know, Wilkes, what has brought me down?"

"Oh, how can I say, Mr. Gilbert? Maybe this, and maybe that; maybe one thing, maybe t'other."

He was growing dry and uneasy. Mr. West did not see it.

"What do you say to *this* news, my good old friend? We shall be coming back here, and shall open the old place once more. Clear away all this; pull down, and put in thorough repair. What do you say to that?"

"Repair!" said the old servant, testily; "why, it would take forty-five thousand pounds—no less—to do that. Repair, indeed! why, it would take forty-five years. Where would we all be *then*?"

This number was his favourite estimate of expense, size, time—any object that he had seen being forty-five times the height of that house, or as far off as forty-five

times the road from here to London. He did not receive the news with welcome.

“ And it will take forty-five men, no less, every day—every day—for years. Repairs, indeed! You may as well pull every stone of it to the ground ! ”

“ No fear of that, Wilkes. A clever fellow is coming down to-morrow to look at it. He knows what to do, and will take care that nothing shall be touched, but what is necessary. We shall turn in the workmen, too. Lots of employment for the labourers about. Think of this! Clear the place in time ; and give these trees breathing-room.”

“ Then there’s few labourers you’d get about here. Since the labour was stopped fifteen years ago, who was to employ them ? ”

“ They’ll come fast enough, never fear, Wilkes, too many of them, I’m afraid. And then for the furnishing and decorating ; and you, Wilkes, shall look after it all. What

would you like to be, now? Steward, butler, what? Choose yourself now."

"Oh, that's all well enough, Mr. Gilbert. Where would the like of me get my years and strength for *that*? But see here, Mr. Gilbert," continued the old man, slowly, "what's all this for? Is it that you're bringing *home* some one—a slip of a creature?"

"I don't say that, Wilkes. But you don't seem half pleased. Why, surely, wouldn't you like one of the old stock to be here?"

"It's a foolish thing, and always was a foolish thing," went on the old man, "and leads to no good. The keeper up yonder there, a man of a good fifty, took up with a child of twenty, only two year ago, and where is he now? He's there; but where is *she*?"

"My good old friend," said West, a little provoked, "you are getting foolish, and talk absurdly. I am not a gamekeeper, nor fifty either, nor forty, for that matter."

"It won't do, and it never does," went on Mr. Wilkes, in the same discontented strain. "It's folly, and ends in folly, or worse. If you're for pulling down the old place, and cutting the trees, to please a child with a pretty face, mind, it's not because you haven't had the warning,"

"But I've had no supper, Wilkes," said Mr. West, a little impatiently. "The old kitchen chimney draws still, I know. I saw the smoke. See what they can do for me, like a good old fellow."

It was a curious night for Gilbert West. Later, when the little meal was done, and a bottle of the old wine found in the cellar drank, he himself took a lamp and the keys, and walked over the ancient house. Everywhere was decay; the paper was falling from the walls, the boards were decayed. He paused in every corner, for with each was associated some scene or memory. Here was his father's bedroom, and that bedstead, whose canopy shook and nodded

at him like the plumes of a catafalque. From that bed had angry, trembling arms waved and menaced him ; from that bed had fiery eyes flashed, and an angry voice thundered expulsion, misery, punishment. At the foot of that bed he had made a weak submission. Here, below, was the library, the books mouldy and damp, the air close, where another scene had taken place. A small trembling figure—a pretty, pale, trembling girl—had pleaded for herself and for her father, curate to the old church whose tower he could see from the top window ; and here, where the poachers and vagrants were brought in and judged, was she also sentenced. These things came back on him more vividly than ever they had done, during his lonely walks up the bleak hills over Dieppe ; and, with something like reproach, he asked himself “ how he could ever bring himself to forget them ? ” But a hundred suggestions—delusive reasonings—came rushing in to

reassure him. What is logic to one in his state? Was life to go by in idle moaning over the past, in vain reverie over old ruins, old moral tombstones, instead of practical work, practical usefulness, joined, if you will, to a tender and judicious recollection of what was gone? Eighteen years of dismal wandering was surely a handsome homage enough. Yet, somehow, as he lay down to rest in his old boy's room, there seemed to be ringing in his ear, the awkward warning of the old servant.

CHAPTER VII.

DREAMS.

ON the next day arrived Mr. Jenkinson, the clever and "adapting" young architect, who was later to develop into the well-known reviver of the mediæval style, and who was indeed now studying the best models at home and abroad, and surely laying the foundation of the great reputation he later earned. How many of the asylums, poor-houses, institutions, churches, with which our happy England is dotted over, dappled brick structures—piebald almost—owe their inspiration to

him and his genius! In little rows of almshouses, dainty showy little gems, gables, and spires, and an arched colonnade running in front, he is specially happy. No one manipulates coloured bricks like him, or with such surprising fertility of fancy—who does not know “middle-age” Jenkinson, as he is pleasantly styled in the profession? Our noblest monster hotels—dashing and florid in conception, running wild in windows—and railway stations, are his creations. A spirited young artist indeed.

He ran down to Westtown, and was walking gaily round the house, with oblong book and pencil in hand, his head put well back. Mr. West wondered at his fertility of device. If one thing did not suit, he had another ready in a second. In twenty minutes he had the whole arranged; “we run up a short stumpy campanile at the corner, to give a rococo look, and break the monotony; a wooden verandah running

round the corner at the other end; bow-windows, and terrace-work, and vases." Inside, "we break in a door here," "throw out a window there, take in these two little closets to the hall, and get up a short mediæval stair." All this was what he called mere patching and piecing, and would take little or no money—a bagatelle. Perhaps middle-age Jenkinson's principle is not such a bad one after all, and this judicious touching might save many an old house.

Mr. West remained three days, and before he went saw an ornamental gardener, and many labourers busy with the clearing. The place was, indeed, a perfect jungle. As he looked on the bright morning from the steps he seemed to see Lucy's figure moving down the walk that ran up the centre. He had, indeed, often described it to her, and her eyes used to quicken with interest as he spoke. She reverenced those old places, "And the quicker you get all done," he

said, from the window of his chaise, "the better." The old retainer, Wilkes, still dissatisfied at "the rookem-rackem" work going on—such was his strange phrase—turned away, shaking his head, as the chaise drove off, and as he went down stairs, said, "we'd all see how it would be to-morrow—next day."

In London, again, Mr. West found plenty to do. The time was indeed too short. He lighted on old friends. He was to them as one returned from beyond the seas. He had been called to the Bar, and went out to search out some friends of the profession. Many, indeed, had often mentioned him in his absence, and said that if West had only stuck to the profession he would have been at the top of the tree. Wonderful tree ! Surprising climbers ! And yet those perched on that uncomfortable apex looking down and seeing all below crawling up, may wonder and smile at the infinite labour and

pain of the progress, the sore and torn hands, the bleeding marks, to say nothing of the maimed and bruised who have fallen, and lie dead, or wounded, thickly round the root. Mr. Justice Banting had been heard to ask, what had become of that intelligent young fellow, who had been with Colter, Q.C., in Cox and Tyrrell. West went to see Fox Selby, who had started with himself, and was now a faded rusty Q.C., with no time to snatch his dinner, up half the night—in short, what is called, “doing admirably” at the Bar. Fox Selby looked up at him, weak-eyed and fretful. He was peering into a little ocean of briefs bubbling up before him like waves, but recollected his old friend, and was as glad to see him as such a body could be. In a moment he had asked him to dine on —let him see—Sunday. Very well. Sunday then. He was terribly busy *now*.

On Sunday Mr. West went, and found his friend, whom he had left a cheerful

bachelor with no responsibility—with a stout wife and seven children now. Even there he was “terribly busy.” The eldest girl was sixteen. After dinner, Mr. West asked about other friends, and then came to what was on his mind—

Harcourt Dacres!

“To be sure! Fox Selby had lost sight of him for some time. Used to know him when he went circuit. Could sing a love ditty, and bring tears into your eyes. He was a good amusing creature, would make you laugh by the hour; but, between ourselves, was a man one should give a very wide berth to—a fellow that would ask you for a five-pound note, on the very day he was introduced to you.” Mr. Selby mentioned this after a pause, and with mystery, as one of the most heinous crimes in the decalogue. Mr. West was prepared for it, and not so shocked as the other expected. “You know,” Selby went on, “there are stories about him—shady his-

tories—borrowing from the young fellows just called. I don't vouch for it, you know ; the poor devil couldn't help himself—body and soul, belonged to the Jews."

This was the point, and Mr. West soon found what he wished to know—that a certain Isaacs was his chief creditor, and had nearly "caught him" when he was here last. He was told many a little history of him, having a dramatic interest in those details of shifts, and struggles, and desperate devices, which are, indeed, culpable, but are the gaspings of a drowning man struggling to keep his mouth above water.

For a week nearly Mr. West was busy following up this clue—visiting the strange dens where money-lenders lived, and having strange interviews with them. His business-like practical ways did something, his engagement for future settlement did more ; everything was happily smoothed away,

and Mr. Isaacs complimented him, and said nothing would give him greater pleasure than to do business *personally* with Mr. West; at which the latter bowed and smiled.

“*She* will be more pleased with this,” he thought, as he came away, “than with the house.”

This action and business was like the sea-side, or change of air. He enjoyed success. His sister wrote regularly, with a little news of the place, how Dr. Macan and Dr. White were raging against each other in the most scandalous way; how there was a frantic craze to rush after the Guernsey Beauforts; how Mr. Blacker was more ridiculous and absurd than ever, and fast losing his head. But there was little about Lucy. He had, indeed, knowing her want of sympathy with this family, begged of her not to see much of them: “My dear Margery, I know you do not like them, and why should you punish yourself or punish

them by being disagreeable? Much better keep away. She will write herself."

Then he went down to Westtown again, saw that dexterous workmen had done wonders, and staying a few days, came up. He was pleased with all this work.

"Now," he said, "if I could only do something for him with Sir John Trotter." For *her* more properly. This seemed almost a hopeless business. Yet his spirits rose with the difficulty. He had a Scotch friend in London, whom he made out, and who knew another friend, who was very intimate with Sir John. With this gentleman, West was made acquainted, meeting him at a little dinner. "As for Sir John," said he, "he is the most terrible little schemer in the world, and it is infinitely hard to approach him; but this moment, I am afraid, is the worst you could have chosen. His son's illness has assumed a very unfortunate shape; in fact, as I heard this evening, something very like this," and he

touched his own forehead with his finger. “Are you after his little borough—he thinks he can move the empire with it; that every one should be on his knees to him, for this tremendous political lever. There was an Irish barrister he met, who delighted him with singing songs, and telling stories, but who treated him in a very free-and-easy way, and, I believe, told him, to be off with himself and his borough.” This strange character lived, as we have seen, at Trotterstown, N.B., and Mr. West, getting a letter of introduction, went down by the coach on the very next morning.

Inside was a sharp-looking, long-faced, sallow passenger—evidently professional. This gentleman was reading with a sort of challenging manner, his head on one side, a thick volume in yellow paper covers, and which Mr. West knew to be a French book. He was amused by the unconscious behaviour of the gentleman, who, at about every second page, moved uneasily in his place,

turned over the leaf angrily, and uttered a whispered sound of impatience. It was like a discussion going on between a smooth, fluent arguer, whom nothing could put out, and an eager, angry opponent, who had not much command of language. At last he said aloud, "Pish ! arrant rubbish ! Who ever heard the like ?" And Mr. West could not help laughing. He was in *such* good spirits in these days !

The other laughed too. "I am as absurd as this fellow," he said ; "but really these Frenchmen try one's patience so much with their elegant generalities. Now, here's this Poisson," he added, turning round the cover of his book, "a fellow who enjoys a reputation. Poisson on Delusions. You know the book ? fifth edition, and all that. Yet positively one-half is fine writing. Fancy one of our medical fellows writing such stuff. Bosh ! I can't read French well. Here is the English of it : 'There is nothing more miserable than the condition

of ces malheureux. *Mon Dieu!* Let us picture their condition a moment. The night sets in—the door of the cell is closed. He thinks of his friends—his wife. “Oh, come to me and help me in my abandonment,” he cries.’ And I assure you, sir, it goes on for half-a-dozen pages of that stuff. And that’s a medical book, sir ! ”

On this introduction, the two gentlemen grew friendly and communicative. It came out presently the stranger knew France very well, and Dieppe too. “Passed through it the other day. The fact is, there is an establishment near Paris in which I have two or three patients. You know, all that is my department. I dare say you have seen or heard of Adams on Idiocy. Well, I am Adams, and I do a good deal in the Idiocy way. But I don’t draw pictures of the *malheureux* in their cells. The French are more humane and skilful in their treatment, though when they come to theory, like this fellow, they break

down. No, Poisson, my boy; you are a charlatan. I assure you the quantity of miles I have to get over, flying from one part of the world to the other to see this and that patient, is astonishing, and very fatiguing. Now, I am posting down to a baronet, who has got something wrong with his son—a great trial for him—an old friend of mine."

The other started.

"What! Sir John Trotter?" said Mr. West, eagerly. "Why, I was going to him also."

"Really?" cried the other, "a brother, a rival, a double-horse power. No?"

Mr. West smiled, and set him right.

CHAPTER VIII.

YET ANOTHER WRECK.

A LONG journey, a day and a night, and such companionship, dining together, travelling together, in these days often made warm friendships; and when they reached the Scotch town, and took a chaise together to go out to Trotterstown, the physician had learned what was his companion's errand, and had promised to aid it in every way. It was a gloomy house, and they found Sir John to be a strange, short, wiry, eccentric little man. He was, besides, a nineteenth-century Jacobite, had portraits

and relics of “Charles Edward,” and talked of the Pretender as if he were alive. The misfortune that was coming on his son seemed to affect him very little as compared with politics; and the physician’s introduction of his friend as a gentleman whom he met on the road, and who had some business in that part of the country, seemed to him quite a matter of course. Politics was his craze, and he talked them at dinner, inveighing against what he called the “arrant old Whigs of 1745,” who were the ruin of this country. “The present Royal line, sir, is effete. We want the true old stock back again. I am told it still exists in a Neapolitan house. Ah, if that could be followed up, and relations opened with them, there would be plenty found to rally round the old standard.”

Mr. West had travelled, had seen that part of Italy where this royal house flourished, and, to the great interest of his host, described all of them minutely, es-

pecially the heir of the house, about whom Sir John was very curious. Sir John was a complete oddity, and the physician said, later, the infirmity of the son was but a stage off. Then, coming to talk of the French and Dieppe, the baronet started off:—

“By the way, there was an Irishman I had to do with who lived there. I wonder what’s become of him? He behaved very badly—a wild, scatterbrained fellow, but still uncommonly pleasant. I assure you he sang ‘Charlie is my darling,’ in this very room, in the most ravishing way. It runs in my ears now. You could hear the pipes and the Highlanders coming up the street—as fine a thing as ever I heard. He spoke very free and easy, but independently. I couldn’t blame him. What a voice and spirit! A true Celt! a true Celt, sir!”

With the baronet in this tone, it was not difficult, it may be conceived, for Mr. West

to accomplish what he came for. He was made to stay the night, and when he went his way, after Sir John had seen him out to his carriage, he took with him an assurance that he would be very glad to see Mr. Dacres there again, talk the matter over, and hear his noble-spirited friend join in “Charlie is my darling ! ”

“ You are a very warm friend and admirer of his, evidently,” said Sir John. “ I don’t wonder. He’s a gifted fellow, and fine company. Perhaps you like singing. We shall certainly put him in Parliament, and he will delight them all *there*. You are a true friend of his ? ”

Of *his* ? Sir John hardly knew human nature, and perhaps West coloured a little as he thought how little disinterestedness there was in this advocacy.

Such were Mr. West’s adventures during nearly six weeks of a time which he afterwards looked back to as to one of the pleasant eras in his life. The clouds had

broken; there was a tranquil sunlight over the sweetest flowers. The fair objects of daily life seemed to bask in this sunshine. Through all his journeys and progresses, through the long night he had no solitude, but a calm, tranquil happiness, an endless succession of pleasant pictures, an ineffable sense of looking forward, and a confidence for the delightful future that was approaching. He had by long practice during those solitary walks, when he was in a far different mood, trained his mind to an endless play, and it could entertain him, as he walked, with perpetual pictures. This that obedient servant will always do, if it only gets practice. Thus he had always found himself good and interesting company. Of these pictures, thus inexhaustible in variety of patterns, there was one, where was a gentle face of trusting affection in the centre—with the fluttering emotions of surprise, joy, delight, as he unfolded his news.

So at last, all being happily accomplished,

he turned his face once more to the little French port, and set off for Brighton, then the favourite port for embarkation. There was the familiar churn-shaped *Eagle*, ready to plod her steady course across and back again—much what an old coach would be to our railway carriage. It was a fine cheerful day. There were pleasant families going across, about to stop, for the night merely, among the détenus at the French port, going on in the morning to Paris, and thence on the Grand Tour. There were gay daughters, to whom all was new, a “dear papa,” delighted himself; their carriage and the courier were on board. These things Mr. West learned from the girls themselves, who were vastly entertained with the lively good-natured Englishman, who was crossing with them, and whom “dear papa” pronounced “as sensible a man as he ever met;” whom they, too, thought so cheerful and amusing, and even handsome itself. Long after, Cherry used to rally Eliza on

the attention of that pleasant gentleman. From that grave forehead had passed away all gloom and depression, the sense of thought and hopelessness, and the look of “being ten years older” which he had so gratuitously taken on himself. The dull, unfashionable grey livery, which *had* been in keeping, had given place to handsome and even fashionable garments. This was no bit of dandyism, but an almost unconsciousness of his old habit and old nature, which made him think that to be well dressed was to *be* a gentleman, almost as much as behaving with honour, truth, and profound courtesy, and the other virtues. They had “a charming passage,” every one saying that *the Eagle* was really a fine boat, and complimenting the captain at dinner on commanding such an admirable craft—compliments indeed more justly due to the forbearance of the weather, it being a true ladies’ day—*the Eagle* being sure to behave in the most outrageous,

imbecile, helpless way, when there was anything like a heavy sea on.

Now came in sight the low-lying flats of the French coast, the theatrical *Phare* glittering in the sun, the two wickerwork piers, all white, drawing on. Now they were gliding by the great gilt cross, and, turning the bend, appeared the little town and port, the low gay houses, the crowded quays, the English, in full waiting for their prey, in ranks. Now Mr. West's heart began to flutter, and he looked out anxiously as they glided by.

Then the ranks began to move and walk along to keep up with the vessel. It was like the opening of an opera. He seemed to have been away years. He saw the familiar figures waiting, as usual, with an interest that no repetition could pall; Captain Filby with his stick; Mr. Blacker, with eager eye, prying at the crowd of passengers on the deck, as though he had been expecting a whole colony of friends,

and here they were come at last. He had indeed noted the substantial travelling-carriage, the courier, and the no less substantial family with whom his quick intelligence at once associated it. About them there could be "no mistake;" it was a good investment for attention. "I should be most happy to be of any service to you. I am the secretary to the English Fund here, &c." It all seemed quite strange to Mr. West thus returning to the settlement, and for the moment the look of the whole curiously depressed him. The very familiarity, instead of encouraging, made him melancholy. At last his eye suddenly lighted on his sister, cold, but stiff and anxious, looking and gazing wistfully at the deck.

All were now coming ashore, and in a moment he was beside her, and had her arm in his. The custom-house officers of the place knew their own colonists very well, and were always indulgent to them

about the formal searching. Mr. West was set free in a moment.

“ Margaret, Margaret dearest, I am back with you again. And how have you been? And tell me about yourself. Everything here looks just the same.”

And he looked round eagerly. There was a constraint and nervousness in her manner which he did not notice.

“ Oh, yes,” she answered; “ I have been so lonely without you, Gilbert. And now let us get home. You must be so tired; and we will have dinner at once.”

“ Tired! Not I, Margery,” he said, gaily, still looking about. “ I have travelled too much since to be tired. Oh, I have such adventures to tell you! How do I look? Not so hang-dog as when I went away—eh? And such plans, Margery. What do you think? I was down at the old place. Does that surprise you? Upon my word, this looks all festive. I never thought it was such a gay place before! ”

“*Do* come home,” she said, impatiently. “Surely you have seen this, over and over again. I want to hear everything. Do come!”

He looked at her with a little astonishment. “My dear Margery,” he was beginning, when an impatient exclamation broke from her lips, and he felt her hand beat on his arm. He looked up, and there —*there* before him was the soft face that for all these weeks had been present to him, that had figured in all the little reverie dramas which had been playing before him morning and evening, and sometimes in dreams at night.

Dreams, indeed! Why did he not go forward to meet her, and not stop thus irresolutely? *She* did not see him—was certainly not thinking of him at that moment, for her hand was on the arm of a tall handsome man, that looked at least ten years younger than Mr. West. She was bright, delighted, and animated. Her face

was gazing up at the handsome Spanish face —looking into the dark interesting eyes with an absorbed overpouring gaze. She was seeing, hearing, him alone. There is a certain instinct, that tells us a whole history in one flash, with neither time nor space; and in that one second, Mr. West seemed to read a long story, with all its details, which the reader may have guessed long ago.

First the surprise, then the shock, over-powered him. Now *she* saw him. With a start and a rush of colour to her cheek she stopped—then put out her hand, with an embarrassed, “Ah! Mr. West! Returned to us!” He bowed, and said, “Yes; I have come back.” Two of the usual unmeaning speeches, for which neither was certainly accountable in such moments of doubt and agitation. The few sentences that followed may be imagined.

“ We were expecting you so long. We were wondering what had become of you——”

He was still looking with the same surprise, and had not yet collected himself. Now Mr. Dacres had come up. There was a constraint also in *his* manner.

“ Hallo, West, come back at last ! ‘Pon my word, we were wondering, I can tell you. We thought you had given us the slip, my dear friend. If you had not left Miss Margaret behind to answer inquiries, I don’t know what odd stories would have been set afloat. What on earth have you been doing ? ”

Dacres repeated this question in a half-bantering, half-insolent manner, that on another occasion might have seemed to Mr. West a little offensive. He heard only the last words. He was now recovering, and answered mechanically :

“ I had business—some private business.”

The young girl looked at him reproachfully, and then said suddenly :

“ You know Colonel Vivian ? Of course you heard of the wreck ? Oh ! everybody

has heard of it ! No, you had gone away.” Then she introduced them.

“ Oh ! ” Dacres went on, “ here’s Blacker flourishing up. See what he’ll say. I wish you heard his private opinion. You may be sure the story lost nothing in *his* hands. And I tell you what I think you seem to have forgotten to bring over with you, my dear boy,” continued Mr. Dacres, in his most offensive familiarity — “ that little article known to mankind as the tongue. Ha ! ha ! ”

“ I think we had better go home, Gilbert dear,” said his sister, anxiously. “ You must be tired—and there is the luggage.”

“ Yes,” he said, abruptly, “ I *am* tired. Let us go.”

Brother and sister both turned away hurriedly.

“ Hallo, West ! How d’ye do ? Where are they gone ? ” said Mr. Blacker, pushing hurriedly by ; he had secured possession of

the new family,—“I saw you talking to them on the deck.”

Mr. West did not answer him, but said, a little wildly :

“What is this? Oh, what *does* all this mean, Margaret?”

“Oh, my poor Gilbert,” said his sister, with quite a tone of agony in her voice, “you must prepare yourself for a trial; for they say *she is to be married to him.*”

CHAPTER IX.

CONSTANCE.

TO that night Margaret often looked with **T** a shudder. He affected to talk of what he had seen and heard in his travels, but she knew what was raging in his heart. As the evening drew on, the bright look seemed actually to fade out of his face; the old look, which he had taken away with him, to return. He barely sat out their little dinner.

“I cannot stay shut up here,” he said, starting up; “I *must* have air. This stifles me. Forgive me, Margaret—the first night, and all—but I *must* go. I have been ac-

customed, of late, to the open places of England."

She said nothing, but how she felt for him! How she would have felt for him, had she seen him going along up the loneliest walk of the place, unconscious of everything, and when he reached the open field at the top talking aloud :

" My God ! that it should come to this ! What have I done ? What crime have I committed, to be punished in this way ? What will become of me ? How shall I keep my head—my wits ? She did it on purpose to play with me—to mock and make a fool of me. And, O my God ! let me learn to pray that all thoughts of revenge may be kept away from me ! "

He was walking along rapidly, and talking in this incoherent way.

" God forgive her ! God forgive her ! "

It sounded more like, " God punish her ! God punish her ! "

" What is to become of me ? What is

life for me? Another series of wretched thoughts, and miserable demons pursuing me everywhere. All wrecked again, and never to recover for years. Oh! what deep, wicked, *cruel* malice—and what folly to meet it! One lesson should have been enough, but I was not to be taught."

When he came in, that night, his sister stole a look at him, and saw the traces of a hopeless dejection and despair in his face. It wrung her very heart. She saw before them both a time of agony, worse than any that had gone before; and in her room that night, she did not pray that vengeance should not enter into her heart. Her words were more unmeasured:

"That wretch, with her false ways, her smooth face, and soft words! How dare she do it? But if I live and have strength, she shall be punished! She shall!"

Miserable night! Though the sum of unhappiness and squalor made a large total in the colony, there was no such misery as

theirs, in the very meanest little lodging. A worn and wistful face, that of Constance, the little cousin, looked in on him as he sat abstracted and by himself that night. Margaret had come to her, and almost sternly bid her go to him. "God help us all," she said to her; "you don't know what is coming, and the misery that is before us. We had this once before. You encouraged him, recollect, in this folly—a fine piece of self-sacrifice, as *you* thought it! You set him against me, his own sister, just to gratify his present humour. I knew him better. See what it has come to now! You are accountable." Yet she was not angry. She could not but have compassion, for that soft gentle face, which had now grown so worn and wistful. "You speak to him, and try and comfort him, if you can. He likes you. I have not the arts for *that*. And yet I warned him. Oh, if Heaven does not punish *her*, and soon, let her take care that I do not reach her."

Constance stole in upon him. He looked

up and started, and greeted her with a show of interest. "Ah, my poor Constance. Your foolish cousin has come back to you. Well, you see how the Machiavellian advice has ended. You are no doctor, I fear, my child, and had better keep to the household. Our crafty plot has not brought us much."

"Oh," she exclaimed, passionately, "I am wretched and miserable. Yes, Margaret is right; it was all my doing, and I shall never forgive myself."

He was startled at her real grief. "No, no, my dear child, you must not think that. And I don't mean it. It was my own folly, and it has served me right. When a man could be such a child as I have been, it is right I should suffer. But all I ask is;—let us shut the subject out, as quick as we can. Let me bury my own folly, as soon as need be. Of course you must pity or even feel a contempt for me. I can't help that. All my life has been a struggle, and I know what a poor weak creature I am, and ever shall

be. I have done my best, and I have suffered for it, and am now going to suffer more. But I rely on *you* for one thing at least,—you will do me a real service,—control *her*, one who makes too much of such”—and he smiled—“of such a trifle. I know Margaret, and if this takes hold of her—it is enough that it will take hold of me. We must learn to bear these things. Now leave me, like a dear child.”

Early the following morning they found him, with the same hopeless look of dejection, but with, also, an affected air of cheerfulness, which made her very heart sink. He was writing letters. “Tell me of something to do, Margaret,” he said, “after this long holiday I have had, I should do some work.” He had letters by him finished. One was to the Jew gentleman, in which he most earnestly pressed him to conceal all mention of his name in the recent settlement; in fact, he was to assure Mr. Dacres that the whole was merely an

exercise of his own forbearance, and indulgence. He hinted, too, that any further liquidation would depend on the observance of this condition. "They shall not know I have been such a dupe of theirs," he said to himself, as he folded it.

Then he wrote to Sir John Trotter, with a similar request. As for the house West-town, and "middle-age Jenkinson," he thought of the sensible old servant's prophecy. Yes, it might be finished now, as it had been begun; and they would both go over there, fly from this horrid place—after a time, for he must stay and see the end.

In these horrible days, a restlessness came on him, and he could not sit quiet at home. He felt that periodical sinking at the heart, which comes in when some great matter is in the transition stage; and he would start up and rush out, and walk by the sea on the bleak and bare edge of the coast that faced England. On this very morning, as he was going along, one friend he met was struck

with the change, and asked had he been ill in England ? Then a dagger seemed to pierce him, as he saw Lucy tripping along with a face bright, full of hope, looking forward as to the brightest future, now fast drawing on. She was coming from the post, her favourite errand, and had her hand full of letters. She looked charming, —this being possessed with one thought or one image, lighting up eyes, face, and all.

“ Oh, I am so glad I met you ! We were going to see you to-day. I am very glad you have come back. Do you know, you were away quite a whole age ? ”

“ Was I ? ” he said, in a cold and indifferent way that he could assume when he pleased. “ It seemed to me hardly a week.”

“ And such events have taken place during your absence. You heard of the storm, and of the shipwreck, and of Colonel Vivian’s gallant behaviour. Oh, it was noble, was it not ? It was in all the English papers ! ”

This dear girl was so genuine, and so possessed with that one thought, that she thought it only natural to speak of what was uppermost in her mind. She did not see even how he shrank and shuddered.

“I was down there too,” she went on. “At the Port, during the storm—I saw it all. It was a thing I shall remember to my dying day.”

“I know,” he said, bitterly; “we had it all in the papers, the hero, and all.”

She looked at him with some surprise. Perhaps town life had spoiled him—and she coloured.

“By the way,” he said, abruptly, “you remember I said something, going away, about looking after your father’s debts and his difficulties.” He leant on the words with a sort of satisfaction. “The fact is, I have had so much to do with my own private affairs—getting Westtown restored, *for my sister and I* to go and live there——”

“And are you going to live there?” she said, with some astonishment.

"And why not, pray?" he said, with the same bitter smile. "No harm, I hope, in the owner of a place going back to it? There is more reason, surely, for our going back there, than for our staying in this miserable place?"

Again was Lucy distressed—surprised, and could not answer.

"But as for your father's affairs—as I say, I was so busy going about, really I could not spare time to—"

Her face fell.

"It *was* unreasonable to expect it," she said. "And yet you have always been so kind and generous, and your saying so—"

"But you would not bind me down by a careless expression, as if by a bond, Miss Dacres?"

Lucy's eyes flashed.

"I bind you down to nothing," she said, drawing herself up. "You were good enough to say you would do something while you were in town. We would have scorned any pecuniary obligation, as we did

before ; and thank Heaven we are under none now. I think it was unkind of you, and it will be a sore disappointment to my poor father, to whom I dropped a hint of what you said. He was reckoning on it."

" I cannot help that," he said, growing excited. " What obligation, what tie, is there, that I should be expected to come forward and make these sacrifices ? I do not mean to be a fool *all* my life."

The look of pity she gave him was indescribable. " I see," she said, after a pause ; " I understand. And this helps me to tell you what I should have had to tell you later. You remember," and she looked down, " a bargain we once made—that after a time I was to try hard if I could learn to like and love you, so as hereafter to see if I could with perfect happiness cast my lot with yours——"

" Perfectly," he said, with the same attempt at being sardonic. " Only, I think, there was no agreement exactly——"

“ So much the better,” she said; “ for I can tell you now that I see it would be hopeless to look for happiness in such an arrangement.”

“ And do you tell me—have you the hardihood to tell me,” he said passionately—“ do you venture to tell me that what has passed to-day has led you to that? Do you suppose I can accept such a story? For shame! for shame! I am not so steeped in folly as that, now.”

“ I did not say anything like that,” said Lucy, with her voice trembling. “ And it is unworthy to insinuate such an idea. I do not say it is unkind, for I expect no kindness from you. Heaven knows what has changed you! ”

“ I changed! ” he said, with great excitement. “ That is not so bad a way to turn it. I see your father’s lessons have not been thrown away. Have I not eyes? O God forgive you, Lucy, for what you have done! What have I seen myself within these few

hours that I have been here? What is the talk of the place busy with? And you think I can accept an excuse of this sort.

She was confounded. She was too genuine a girl to think of denying what he said. Its truth had never struck her before. But, strange to say, it never occurred to her that Mr. West had cause of complaint, or that he was suffering from jealousy. He went on :

“Ah! you cannot deny it, I see. I congratulate you. But take care. It may not turn out so smoothly as you think. Come, let us not amuse the gossips here with a history of our disagreement.”

This was too late a caution; for here was Captain Filby coming round the corner with an amused look in his eyes. She was utterly unconscious. One delightful thought engrossed her. He told of the scene later—“the duet,” as he called it; “she flashing and flourishing at him, and that poor fool

begging and pleading with a hang-dog, sheep-faced look. I declare it was as good as Drury Lane. What soft heads we do find in this world!"

As Mr. West turned away, he heard a light step and a quick rustle, and eyes, that had watched his face of bitter disappointment and agony, now hastily turned away. Constance, with a timorous look, stole on her quiet march down the street. In the colony, every one of any age and degree, could thus go about, and the easy canons of society did not exact chaperons. He saw her, and walked after her impatiently.

"*She* knows it all. They will all know my humiliation in time. That man will take care to spread it." Then he came up with Constance, and said a little bitterly: "So you are like the rest. Do you find me too gloomy and troublesome, that you must pass me in the street?"

"I, cousin Gilbert!" she almost faltered. "I thought, as you liked so much being

alone—I was afraid—you would not wish me to trouble you. *Indeed* that was the reason.”

“ I suppose it was ; indeed, I know it was ; and I speak my thoughts. For, I find it very hard of late to be sweet tempered.”

“ Oh, cousin, if you only knew how I feel for you, and if *I* only knew how to help you, or to soothe your trouble, I would be so happy ! ”

“ Poor little Cousin Constance,” he said, kindly taking her hand. “ What are you talking of? Trouble, indeed! That is a fine and complimentary name for a full-grown man’s folly. That at my age I should have been betrayed into such foolishness ! ”

“ Not folly,” said she, warmly, “ unless we call generosity, nobleness, kindness, goodness, folly. But what name can I give to the heart that could play with such qualities, and make light of them? I can only call it wickedness.”

He turned round to look at her, a little surprised at this warmth.

“ My dear Constance, you cannot understand. The real criminal, the real fool, is beside you. One might say it would be a good lesson—only I am past all that.”

They were at the corner of the place which led to their house.

“ Now,” she said, timidously, “ I shall run away home. It was very good of you to let me go with you. I know you like your solitary walks.”

“ Lonely ! ” he repeated. “ Yes, it is better to expend my selfishness on myself. Come,” he said, with an air of gaiety, “ let us come to the hill, my favourite walk, and I shall tell you some of my adventures in England.”

She saw this was an enforced gaiety, and, what was worse, all the colony could read in his face, the whole history of his mortifications and sufferings. They were amused by watching his restless, eager eyes, which

affected to avoid, while they followed, the movements of the other pair. The colony was also watching his wandering manner, his flushing cheek, and the haughty defiant air of Lucy towards him, who considered herself unkindly and ungenerously treated, and said she could never, never forgive Mr. West for the bitter things he had said to her.

Constance, in a demure "Sister of Charity" way, saw and heard all these things, and would have given the world to have told him; but this was too great a liberty to take with one she so worshipped at a distance. Alas! for this poor West, with a load on his heart that by brooding was to grow heavier every hour!"

C H A P T E R X.

THE CHARMING BEAUFORTS.

MEANWHILE the Dieppe colony went on in its old course, and was very busy watching the Guernsey Beauforts and their doings. Wilkinson, or Beaufort, was the name most frequently on people's lips. The latter gave little dinners, ordered with exquisite taste from Chabot's. Many of the English used to get in a joint or so, on a man's head, from "Shabow the Resty-wrong's;" but the Beaufort dinners were the subject of envy and desire. The limit was rigidly fixed at ten persons, one of

which select band Mr. Blacker usually contrived to be. They were charming little feasts, and the air of mystery and selection lent a fresh attraction to them. It was known that Mr. Blacker had full power to stop and retain any flying person of distinction—a Sir Thomas, and even an Honourable Charles, or John. His air of importance increased daily, and he was always seen hurrying off express, on business.

“My good sir,” he would say to a friend, “*I can’t* get you to a dinner. We cannot do that sort of thing, you know. I dare say, indeed, we might manage you in the evening.”

Who would have now known the charming Edith Wilkinson, née Edith M’Gregor, the simple parson’s daughter? Certainly not one of her six gauche sisters, still unmarried, at home. She had begun already to “take airs.” She wrote home—and not very often—the most brilliant accounts of “the society here.” “We are thinking of

staying altogether, instead of coming home ;" in which, too, the simple rustic sisters seemed to read with wonder, that Edith was admired and followed by every one. They could not understand, or make it out.

They marvelled much at the Mr. Beaufort whose name figured so often. "The Wilkinson," as Captain Filby called her, was at all the select dinners; so was the pink gentleman, her husband, whose importance had vastly increased from the attentions paid to his wife. The foolish lady seemed to grow proud of her conquest, and was seen everywhere on the arm of Mr. Ernest Beaufort. In these places, and in our modern watering-places, where gambling establishments flourish, it is almost comic to see how quickly the simple and innocent fall into the lax tone of the place, and, so to speak, out-Herod their neighbours. They are fascinated by the novelty and brilliancy, and by the contrast to their own home manners, but have such confidence in their excellent training.

Our Lucy, who indeed at this time was living in a golden cloud that hung before her eyes and encompassed her about, beheld all her friend's behaviour through the same dreamy medium. She admired Mr. Beaufort, and saw everything that was generous and chivalrous in him, admiring him the more “because he had shown himself above the vile whispers of the mean creatures about.”

On this principle, too, she was always with her friend in public places, and the five—Miss Lucy and Vivian, Mrs. Wilkinson Mr. Beaufort, and “Hanco”—made up a little party at public places—at the Port, for instance, where the town gathered. Lucy delighted in thus bearding the colony, and, it must be added, “her enemy also,” as she now considered Mr. West, whose eyes, she fancied, followed her proceedings with grave disapproval.

That unhappy gentleman, living now in a mental fever—restless, disturbed, miserable—seemed to find relief in eagerly watching that

party. From the same reason, as a sort of bitter defiance to "the Dear Girl," he had found himself drawn into a disapproval of the Beaufort party. "She takes them up," he morbidly brooded, "on purpose, because she sees that I know what sort of people they are. I can read the challenge in her eye. What folly, what wickedness, to encourage that poor innocent lady in her foolishness, all to spite me! I will frustrate such wickedness. She may do what she pleases to *me* but I will not look on and see innocence ruined, all for a girl's freak." It seemed to him that duty was calling on him to act. Long after, as he looked back to this season and to the whirl of agitation in which he lived, he thought with wonder of his strange state.

Cousin Constance, infinitely more sensible than his sister Margaret, tried to soothe him. But when the three were together, his sister, excited at the change that was slowly working in him, unconsciously inflamed his

state by dwelling on the details of this affair. Constance, coming from the convent where she was learning French, would contrive to meet him. This he abstractedly would set down to pure accident. Then would follow a walk, in which she, with some heart, invited him to the subject of his troubles. She found his bitter complaints of the place and its society did him good.

“I know what the plan on foot now is,” he would say, excitedly. “Only fancy—to let that poor young girl be sacrificed among these wretches, all because they think it will annoy me. It is shocking; is it not? But it shall not take place. I know about them—more than they think.”

He knew the squire, and thought him a simple, foolish, but good man, who would be sure to take fright at a warning, or even a hint. “I have only to say a word. Though, indeed, if we were to set about exposing all the impostors that come into this place where would it end?”

Constance, though admiring everything he did or even proposed, could not restrain the look of distress that came into her face. "Don't do that," she said, imploringly. "Just oblige me in that one little thing."

"And why?" he asked, almost inclined to smile at her earnestness.

"Because it will lead to mischief. They will combine against you, and make a party; for they are such cruel, unscrupulous people, and stick at nothing. Dearest cousin, do this one little thing for me. I know I am foolish; but I would not see you more unhappy than—I mean, that is—"

"Unhappy," he said. "Well, now I *do* think you are a foolish cousin, and you must think me an empty, childish man indeed. Unhappy. Why? No. I am interested, and therefore should be happy. Unhappy! because a light, not overwise girl, whose father, as they say, I am old enough to be, has chosen to play off her girlish tricks on

me? No, no; we shall wait to see the end, whatever that end may be."

"Poor foolish child," said she, with real sympathy. "I feel a conviction it will not end as she wishes—that Vivian will, *never* marry her."

"You think so?" he said, eagerly. "So do I—so do I. These soldiers are not of the marrying sort. I could tell her half a dozen instances myself of disappointment; but she is impatient. We will know all very soon; for he will get orders to join his regiment, and then the thing *must* be decided one way or other. It must end then!"

That evening, he went up to the squire, who had quite lost his timorous air of gratitude for being noticed, and had actually grown pompous, with an air of business and importance. Mr. West, perhaps, was not the most skilful negotiator; but he was in earnest. He said quietly: "You are a great deal with those Beauforts, and I suppose

know all about them and their family?" The other thought, foolishly, that his interest was about being sought for one of the little dinners.

"Oh, I know them very well," he said, pompously. "We are quite a set together, you know; but really I have made it a rule not to make any request of them. Blacker settles everything for them."

"They say they are from Staffordshire, I think," went on Mr. West, taking no notice of Wilkinson's disclaimer.

"Oh dear yes," said the other. "Beaufort Manor is one of the show places; charming people they are."

"No doubt; but to places of this sort, many charming people come whose account of themselves is their only guarantee. You see, Mr. Wilkinson, you have not been abroad before, and—one learns to be very cautious."

The other's face grew red. "I do not understand you. I know as much—and can

take care of myself as well, as other men. What do you mean? I am sure——”

“Are you sure,” said the other, “that they are the Beauforts of that show place you spoke of?”

“Of course they are. We are to go there and spend a month with them when they go back. What on earth are you insinuating, sir?”

“Because,” said Mr. West, a little imprudently, “they say that those Beauforts have no children——”

“I am sure I don’t know,” said the other, impatiently. “One can hear plenty of idle stories, if one only listens to them. I don’t understand.”

Mr. Wilkinson went away fuming, but a little troubled. The first person he met was Mr. Dacres, who sang out to him cheerfully, with his hand extended:

“Ah, hermit so grey, and so reverend, too,
Tell me what pain this is at my heart!

“ Well, my troubadour, how is the bewitching Mrs. W. to day ? ”

“ She is gone to drive with the Beauforts. By the way,” he said, doubtfully, “ wouldn’t you say that those Beauforts were, what you call, all right ? ”

“ God bless me,” said Mr. Dacres, quickly, “ have they blown up ? *Are they gone off ?* ”

“ Not at all,” said Wilkinson, testily, “ Not at all ! but I just parted from that Mr. West there, and he had some story about the real Beauforts having no children.”

“ Oh, that was it,” said Mr. Dacres, thoughtfully ; “ that came from West, did it ? My gentleman there, says more than his prayers. Methinks, knowing what I do of that party, that I should leave the case to any jury (not a French one, of course), and they’d give their opinion of him without turning round in the box. My opinion, sir, of the said Mr. West is—is—well—not so high as it was.”

“Just what I thought,” said the other, greatly relieved. “And living, as they do, so handsomely—in the first style——”

“Yes, my dear sir! Look at the way they entertain us—another of the little dinners to-morrow. Charmingly done. I have dined, sir, with some of the merchant princes at Liverpool, when our bigwigs were down there, and they did not come near it. Mr. West is a little too fond of busying himself about other people’s affairs. It is unworthy sir. If I were called on to advise, I should say that an action for damages would lie. But there is a reason—every reason, sir—not on the pleadings at present.”

Quite satisfied, the squire went his way. Mr. Dacres, for all his pleasant qualities, had “a bitter drop” in him, and adopted a curious sneering tone towards Mr. West. Perhaps his own acuteness told him the true state of the case as to Lucy’s behaviour, and he thought this was the best way of taking

it. He was also, no doubt, enjoying the friendship of Vivian on the same profitable terms he had done West's generosity—or, at least, this was charitably given out. Some such little tax was always to be paid for the pleasure of Mr. Dacres's intimacy. He soon told his own family, as well as Vivian, who was present, of what he called "West's underhand stab," which was unworthy and unhandsome, and he was afraid could be only too readily explained.

The scorn with which Lucy endorsed this view trembled on her lip and flashed in her eye.

"Yes, papa, *I* can explain it. He finds his enmity to be powerless, and now he thinks to reach me through my friends. I did not think he would stoop so low. Such a poor vulgar story! A bit of gossip from London. There may be fifty Beaufort families. They told Mr. Wilkinson they had relations all over the kingdom."

Vivian smiled. "You are a most enthu-

siastic champion of those people. We must all admit their perfection. Still, I don't *quite* believe in them."

"Ah, *there* is an honourable open hostility! How different that is to stabbing in the dark! It is unworthy, unmanly," she said, with a defiant look and toss of her head, "and I shall take care to show him that his secret insinuations have no effect on our friendship!"

"I say, Vivian," said Dacres, with a wink, "isn't that just like Miss O'Neil in the play? Wouldn't Lulu draw at the *Français*? She'd be worth a hundred francs a night, sir, at the least!"

How cruel this change and hostility to Gilbert West! Yet Lucy did not dislike him; nay, at times, pitied and liked him; but these sudden impulses were part of her character. They quite bore her away with them. Every one, therefore, remarked the renewed and all but exaggerated intimacy between Lulu and her slandered friends.

Every one, too, had seen her stop before Mr. West on the Port, with Mrs. Wilkinson beside her, and say to him with a haughty look—and Captain Filby heard her say it—“Now, Mr. West, you see what effect your message has had upon me. I congratulate you on your new arts.” Then Mr. Ernest Beaufort came up, and with him she walked away ostentatiously. Everybody knew how that “moody West” had tried to invent a clumsy story about the Beauforts—a shocking instance of impotent spite—and was full of Mr. Guernsey Beaufort’s capital way of taking it. So good tempered and gentlemanly:

“My dear ma’am, I shan’t take the least notice of it. It is beneath me. In Town there is a story about every one, once a week. Only better not tell Ernest, who is a little hot in his temper.” And there was infinite art to be used, and chiefly by Miss Lulu’s cleverness and tact, that young

Beaufort was to be kept from hearing the slander.

Unhappy West, whose life now was working in a round of this morbid struggle, brooded over this attack of Lucy's. It was a new turn—a new change. He said to himself, “She shall not put me down in that way. I will live to open her eyes;” and wrote off to his legal friend in England a feverish letter, imploring him to work the thing out, and find the truth, and let him know. After that, let him come over and bring proofs; *he* would pay all—any expense.

“Poor West,” said the legal friend, reading, “what has come over him? He's quite excited.”

CHAPTER XI.

“ON HIS MAJESTY’S SERVICE.”

THE entire colony wondered at the eagerness with which Mr. West now began to mix in what he had once called the foolish shows of the place, being now most anxious never to miss the Corso, or the packet coming in, or the little parties in the small rooms of the place; any scene, in short, where he might have a chance of seeing the pair whose movements were now his life.

One night Vivian had come across the street, to spend one of those evenings, which were so delightful for Lucy. Indeed, this

school-girl had now found herself set free in a new and charming domain, a delicious garden abounding in the rarest scents and flowers, and could not restrain her joy and sense of happiness. She did not look back to the past, as one older would have done; she had not yet learned the value of the little excuses and pretences common in life, and she accepted with complete faith the arrangement proposed by Gilbert West. Had he not proposed to leave it all to her? She was to take time to know her own mind, and all that. She knew it now—oh, how splendidly! In the very young there is always a little of this cruel selfishness, or thoughtlessness. Her father, not unadroitly, would aid this view—as he did on this night.

"Poor West! the man glares at me when I meet him, as if he was going to eat me up. A good, sober, sensible man once, I have no doubt, and I hope will pick up a fat widow, of a suitable age, one of these days, who'll make him very comfortable." Lucy smiled.

Alas! that smile showed how the old image had gone out! “I think,” went on Mr. Dacres, in great spirits, “he has been reading that old novel of Miss What’s-her-name’s, where the tutor thinks he has inspired the sweet child, his pupil, with a tender and reverential interest. My poor Lulu! fancy *you* being handed over to a professor of this sort, to be lectured every morning, and have your mind formed!”

Again Lucy laughed. When laughter comes in at the door, love has flown out of the window. Vivian, with his eyes on her, talked about himself; and presently Mr. Dacres, finding love-making monotonous to an uninterested bystander, slipped out quietly for a few minutes to get a breath of fresh air. The fresh air that invigorated Mr. Dacres, was that of the *café* at the corner, so fatally near his residence. Then Vivian and Lucy began the old, old duet. Long since, as the reader will have guessed, they had settled everything. To Lucy Vivian had

been more explicit than to her father ; she understood how he was situated perfectly.

He had not many friends in the world : one brother, also in the army—no father nor mother—a pair of wandering men, like many soldiers that we meet, whose family is the regiment. For that case we may have sympathy. There was just one relation, then very ill and lingering near death, on whom much depended ; and Lucy understood that any further steps were not to be taken until this matter had come to an issue. She had formed her own ideal of this awful lady ; for she saw that Vivian shrank from her very name, and would not speak of her. A terrible relation, who had much in her power. Mr. Dacres, having looked after Vivian's affairs in what he called "a sort of a way," found everything satisfactory ; so much money in the funds to his credit—all plain sailing, as he said. There was no hurry. Let matters shake themselves free.

At Vivian’s, or rather Lucy’s earnest request, no official intimation of an engagement was given. But it was guessed at, and all but known ; Mr. Dacres always rubbing his hands gleefully, and saying he supposed the young people would knock out something of the kind one of these days. It wasn’t *his* affair. He never interfered—made it a rule.

Mr. Dacres had scarcely departed, when Madame Jaques came tripping over, in great delight, with a packet in her hand. As we have mentioned, she took an unbounded interest in the progress of his affairs, and thought Vivian as handsome and as noble a gentleman as ever bore a sword. A hero, too, who saved gallant men for their wives and families.

“I was passing the post, monsieur,” she said, “and I thought I would ask if there was a letter. The bon Dieu, I think, inspired me, for they gave me this. There must be wonderful news in it—it is so large.”

Vivian opened it hurriedly. It was a long despatch, and labelled "*On His Majesty's Service.*" When the pretty Madame Jaques had gone, Lucy saw his troubled air. He started, and rose hastily.

"What bad news?" she said, anxiously.

"My sweet Lucy," he said, "the worst. There is some trouble expected in one of the islands, and here is the fatal order to join the regiment by the first ship that sails. What *shall* we do?"

Lucy was very pale.

"It is not so bad as I thought; but it is very bad. And you *must* go?"

"Yes," he said, "if I was ill or dying, I dared not hesitate. Alas! what shall we do?"

"And when," said she, anxiously, "does this vessel sail?"

"In a few weeks," he said.

"Ah," said Lucy, cheerfully, "that is a long reprieve. I was afraid it was to-morrow, or next day."

“Yes,” he said; “to be sure. And there are to be further orders; so something to occasion delay may turn up in the mean time. We shall make the most of the reprieve, and not think of what is coming.”

Now entered Mr. Dacres from taking the fresh air—and smelling strongly of it. He was told the news. He was moody, as, somehow, he always was when coming in from the fresh air.

“Most unlucky,” he said, dryly; “and you’ll have to go, of course?”

“He *must*, papa,” said Lucy, eagerly. “The colonel must be with his men!”

“No selling out, nor exchanging, of course?” said Mr. Dacres.

“It would be disgraceful, papa,” said Lucy, answering for Vivian. Then, with assumed cheerfulness and alacrity, “After all, it will make little difference—a couple of years at the outside, if even eighteen months,”

"Perhaps a year even, if it be a short business," said Vivian.

"And he will be back with us here! And by that time all these obstacles will have passed away."

Mr. Dacres was swinging on what he called "the hind legs" of his chair, with his eyes on the ceiling, "crooning," very low, a dismal ditty. He made no further remark. When Vivian rose to go away, and that rather mournful interview ended, Mr. Dacres rose too, and, with apparent cordiality, followed him out; then slipped an arm inside his, and drew him away with "A word in your ear, Vivian, my boy." They went up the street together.

"You see this news alters matters entirely. After what has taken place between you and my Lulu, something must be settled as to time, place, and date. Once a man goes off to Gibraltar, the post takes rather too long coming to be depended on. So as my darling's next friend, I have to look to

these things. See here. I find by our friend *Gally-Nan*, snug in my pocket” (this was his familiar style and title for the Englishman’s friend, the excellent *Galig-nani’s Messenger*), “the mail-ship sails on the twenty-fourth. That gives us, you see, little more than four weeks.”

Vivian, downcast and distressed, answered: “You are quite right. That is the very day. Too near, indeed.”

“Very well. Now we come to what is to be done. What is the arrangement to be proposed? Within that limit, my dear friend, I leave everything to you, and pray, my dear boy, suit your own convenience.”

There was a long pause.

“Mr. Dacres,” said the other desperately, “you know how I feel towards our dear girl. She knows it too; but, if I appear to hesitate in this matter, I implore you to give me credit for the most passionate eagerness to do what is right. You know not what my situation is, and I cannot tell you now.”

"And I don't want to know," said Mr. Dacres, good humouredly. "All of us, here at least, are in queer situations enough, God knows. But, as I said, you'll have time enough to look about you between this and the sailing of the packet."

"I tell you, I am helpless, said Vivian, more desperately, "and have no choice. Things may become smooth, and I pray they may, and I am sure they will. But if they should not, I know *she* will understand."

"Oh now, see here," said Mr. Dacres, gravely, "I won't understand, though. You know, yourself, we can't have any of that. You're a gentleman, and I know all about you and your belongings; so I feel quite secure. To any of the raps here, of course, I'd take quite a different tone, but with *you* it's another matter. You see, yourself, there can't be anything of that sort. You and she have settled it long ago between you. That man, West, a fine, intelligent, honourable fellow, has got his *congé*—between ourselves,

was rather cavalierly sent about his business —all for you. But girls are little cattle. I consider it as next to the rising of the glorious sun to-morrow, that we see you and she standing together, with Penny in his gown between ye. My dear friend, that must be, and no mistake, before you go. To this complexion we must come before the — what’s this *Gally-Nan* says is her name? yes—the *Duchess of Kent* weighs anchor.”

“I shall behave as a man of honour,” said Vivian, “you may depend on that.”

“Indeed, and I wish I was as sure of a hundred-pound note this moment.”

At another time this artful allusion might have had some effect. But Vivian, looking gloomily, walked quickly away.

“By —,” said Mr. Dacres, savagely, as he looked after him, “if he’s hatching any trick, I’ll shoot him on the sands there. And all that they’ll have for his Majesty’s service, or to send home, will be his body.”

CHAPTER XII.

A CRUEL REVELATION.

MUCH interest was now beginning to attend the proceedings of Vivian and Lucy, since some great news had got out, to the surprise and delight of the tattle-mongers, that the colonel could only stay a short time longer, and had received imperative orders to join his regiment at Gibraltar within a short time. That news had indeed just arrived. Mr. West heard it from Captain Filby, to whom he had latterly been gracious, finding him useful:

“ He’ll leave her there, as sure as my

name is Filby. And serve 'em right. It's the usual thing. I know, every town we left, we marched out leaving a batch of deserted virgins crying, and with hearts broken. Any officer that marries is a born donkey. If I had a regiment, and any of my fellows was to make a fool of himself in that way, I'd make his life a burden to him, I would. As for that Vivian, he means nothing—nothing like business, sir, I can tell you. Not he. But he's not in bad hands, and that Dacres won't let him go without something down."

No one of course was weak enough to accept the story of the "ordering abroad, and all that!" There was a much more natural explanation ; Vivian was trying hard "to get out of it." "God speed the good work," said Captain Filby. "There's many a chance for a fellow in this place. If he smuggled himself off as a common sailor in the *Eagle*, I should not blame him. They treated him scurvily—a fellow

on a sick bed, and a knowing, scheming little chit coming over to him, to smooth his pillow, and mix the medicines—not that I'd object to that attendance—but then if I was expected to *pay* for it, you see, in *that way*, it wouldn't exactly do."

It was noticed, too, with infinite satisfaction by the gossip-mongers, that Lucy was growing low-spirited. Here was something dramatic to watch. It fortified the view that the colonel was "too knowing" to let himself be "hooked," and was making preparations to retire cleverly, and decently, from his position. All their sympathies were naturally with him, and it was hoped that he would "escape." They relished specially Miss Lulu's position, who had "jilted" the other, and would now be fairly jilted, in her turn. The colony, therefore, in possession of this prospect, was very happy and pleasant, and Captain Filby said again, it was as good as Drury Lane.

Alas ! there was one to whom all this sport was as death ; who was looking on with strained eyes ; on whose heart this wild passion and expectancy was preying ; who scarcely slept at nights, and who really seemed hurrying towards the fate he had forecasted for himself. People would say, and will say now, " Foolish, ridiculous man ! he should have more sense ; " with the awkward cry, " A man of his age, old enough to be her father—old enough to know better." But there is nothing so fatally tyrannous, so overpowering as the dominion of one passionate idea, on some minds ; on the more tender and delicate it preys like a vampire. His old legal friends, sensible " long-headed " men, might have reasoned with him in vain. Under similar circumstances, they might have fallen into the same folly, though they did not think so.

The Guernsey Beaufort " affaire " still held people's minds. They were the crowned

heads—the king and queen of the place; and as the season was shortly to begin, it was known that then they would glitter with a double effulgence. They were holding themselves apart, in a sort of preserve, and yet still dispensed blessings. The little dinners went on, and of this bounty Mr. Blacker was, as it were, chief almoner.

Mr. Filby, whom he had injudiciously “pooh-poohed” aside, as a man “scarcely the sort of thing, you see,” was discontented, and had now become a dangerous enemy.

As we have seen, he was unscrupulous, said “whatever came into his head,” and had a fine stock of ill-nature, which he never allowed to get low. It was a stupid blunder to have alienated this gentleman. His voice was heard everywhere—and other voices began presently to repeat what his had pronounced so authoritatively. “Giving a ball, are they? All right then! Flowers and lights from Paris; that is, of course,

poor Fazy, there, at the corner. Well, that's all his business."

"Why," added the captain, dropping his voice a little, "do you know what I have made it my business to find out within the last few days? *Not a tradesman in the place has seen their money yet!* Wait until these donkeys put their long ears together, and find *that* out, for they think now that others have been paid, and their turn will come presently. Not a sou, sir! I went to Sody yesterday. Will you believe they owe the man over fifteen hundred francs? They gave him a hundred the first month, as a sop—a blind. That poor fool of an upholsterer—who, I believe, has half-broke himself, getting those mirrors and carpets for 'em from Paris—he has had nothing yet; but on the 25th of next month, when munseer's agent comes over, laden with money, got on the rent-day, he is to be paid in full, and get an order to refurnish Beaufort Manor. Ha, ha! I give

you my honour, the poor idiot told me all this."

"But they *are* rich," says one of the bystanders; "there is no question about it."

"Ah! Is there no question about my grandmamma?" said Captain Filby, rather rudely. "I've said it all along. I went to half a dozen places, and they all had the same story. As for Beaufort Manor, and that rubbish, only wait till that West, a shrewd fellow in his way, ferrets that out. He's on the track."

"Well, I hope they'll give the ball first. They've taken the large room in the Establishment expressly," said Mr. Dempsey.

This was the most damaging conversation about the Beauforts that had yet occurred. There was something very convincing in the ingenious test made by the captain. It was soon whispered round. The Guernsey Beauforts were actually told of it, by Mr. Blacker, who was vastly amused at the importance

of the gossips, and reported it as “an uncommon good thing.” Mr. Beaufort was not as amused as he was.

“We must send a card to that Mr. West, though he has behaved in an ungentlemanly way enough.”

“By the way,” said Mr. Blacker, suddenly, “who was it that was telling me he knows some friends in your county, whom he was writing to—something of that sort? You know that would be very fortunate.”

Mr. Beaufort was a little disturbed at this news, though he smiled carelessly; and, had Mr. Blacker any real observation, he would have seen a scared and terrified look in the wistful face of Mrs. Beaufort, who was sitting over in the window, talking to Lucy. When the gentlemen were gone out, she said to her friend:

“Would to Heaven we were away from this place, or that we had never come here! I am wretched all day long, and all night too. These stories and whispers, and all this

reckless expense! And why should Mr. West behave so? we have done no harm to him, never injured him. Why does he persecute us in this way? What does he mean? It is cruel."

"I know what he means," said Lucy, with a trembling voice. "He has turned into a spy—a detective! How unworthy—how ungenerous! I could not believe it of him. But I can explain it, dear Mrs. Beaufort. *It is his dislike to me.* I could tell you a history about that. He has never forgiven me, because I could not force myself to marry him. Perhaps I deserved it. But how cruel to persecute you, whom I love, for anything I have done. I shall stand by you, never fear, dearest Mrs. Beaufort, and shall never give you up—*never.*"

"I am not worthy of such affection; I am not, indeed," said the pale lady, drawing herself away. "Oh, you don't know me, and will turn against us in time, as all the rest of the world will do—"

"Never!" said Lucy.

"Yes," said the other, hurriedly, "you will; you must. But you will be indulgent, I know. Most of us are not so accountable as we seem. We are hurried along, and must go on, having begun. I loathe this life, I do, indeed, God knows! And I am powerless to stop it—indeed I am."

Tears were in her eyes. Lucy took her into her arms passionately, and the two ladies exchanged all their sorrows, as ladies do in such moods. When she left her, she walked away very fast, full of a grand purpose, and her heart trembling with emotion.

"It must be stopped—if he is not so utterly changed. He was once noble and generous; I will humble myself so far as to appeal to him. If that fails, I shall not be afraid to do battle with him. What *can* I have done to deserve his hate?"

She went straight to his house; she found him alone. He was sitting with his face between his hands. He started up

as he saw her, his fiery eyes almost looking through her.

“A visit from you?” he said. “What does this mean?”

“Mr. West,” she said, firmly, “I have come to you to appeal to that generosity,—to the good feeling which you once had for me, and which I cannot think you have utterly lost——”

He had recovered himself, and become cold. “What do you wish me to do—after all these compliments?”

“This does not promise well,” she said, colouring; “but still I feel it my duty to tell you that I cannot find words to say how unkind—how *unworthy*,” she added vehemently, “I think this system you have taken up, to persecute me through them.”

He looked at her, confounded; then groaned. “Oh, Lucy, Lucy,” he said, “for you to say *this* to me.”

His look, and the agony that was conveyed in his voice, quite touched her.

“ I put it too strongly, perhaps,” she said; “ but is it not unworthy—unworthy of your fine nature, that used to be so noble, and generous, and kind, and chivalrous? Why do you hate us? And why do you persecute us?”

“ But whose change is it?” he answered. “ Whose cruelty, and coldness, and neglect have turned me into what I am now? You might have been gentle, at least; you might have led me on——”

Lucy’s face expressed genuine astonishment, for it never once for a second occurred to this young lady, that she was in the least in fault.

“ Now, what is this new charge? You cannot be in earnest, surely?”

“ No,” he said, bitterly, “ you can see no earnest in things of this sort. You have destroyed me—undone me—wrecked my whole life; and now you come here, because you fear I may do harm to those friends of yours. Look! see this! do I speak without

warrant? I have a letter here. This is what has come to me this morning. These are the sort of people you make your friends! There are grave doubts about them, but we shall presently know the whole truth."

It had not the least effect on Lucy. Her melodramatic mood was at its height. She put back the letter, and, drawing herself up, poured out some bitter words.

"I ask you—what I would ask of any gentleman—is to give over this playing the detective. It is scarcely honourable, is it Mr. West?"

He *now* looked at her very wistfully. "It is for your sake—for your cruel, ungrateful sake!"

"That makes no difference. I want no such protection," she added, now in her full dramatic bearing; "it offends, insults me. My father can take care of me, and *Colonel Vivian* too!"

“ Ah ! Will he ? ” said he, scornfully.
“ How can you be sure of that ? ”

“ Because I trust him,” said Lucy, scornfully, “ and would trust his word. Have you any slur to throw on *that* ? ”

Every word of hers was a fresh stab. But he tried to be calm a little longer.

“ You should be sure, I implore you to be quite sure, if you are going to marry him.”

“ Well,” said she, firmly, “ and if I am ! ”

“ When ?—years hence. That is a long time to wait.”

“ Years ! In a few weeks—a few days perhaps, since you ask me.”

“ *In a few days ?* ” he repeated, wildly.
“ Take care, take care, I conjure you. I warn you. You do not know what you are doing.”

“ I am growing tired of all this,” said Lucy ! “ I am indeed. Leave me, and my friends, in peace. This interest in me seems next to hatred, and I do not want it. No-

thing, nothing you can do, will change me to Vivian. I tell you now, my lot is cast with him for ever. He has my whole heart; and no stories or arts, will make the least impression on me."

He stood looking at her with a dull stare, quite overwhelmed. Yet these were not the real sentiments of this young girl. She spoke in a sort of impulse; her words, and the dramatic tone of the moment, carried her away. She had only wished to make a warm protest.

"Stay with him, then," he replied, in a sort of fury, "and keep him; and never never, will I interfere, whatever happens. On your own head be it. Cast your lot with him; love him. I have done with it. I have done with you. Leave me now; leave me at once! Go from me! I do not wish to see you again! Never! Go!"

She was shocked at the change that had come over him, and, for the first time, it seemed to her that he was ill. In a moment

she was the old Lucy, a compassionate grief for his piteous state overwhelmed her, and she went over to him :—

“I do not know how to express what I wish. I did not mean to wound ; but if I could only explain ! What have I done ? You know yourself—you must recollect what you agreed on—that if I did not find in time, that I could love you.—You remember all that ; and I cannot help loving *him*. I cannot, indeed.”

“Go away—go away ! ” he said, starting up fiercely. “Are you doing this on purpose ? Do you want to drive me mad ? Go away, I conjure you.”

She went sorrowfully, terror-stricken. As she came out, she was confronted on the landing, by a tall menacing figure, who lifted her arms, and said, in a half-whisper, as she passed her by :

“God, in his almighty vengeance, punish you all for this ; and He will ! ”

C H A P T E R X I I I .

THE BEAUFORTS.

FITFUL, fevered, troubled days those were, for the actors in this crisis—the hours seeming to fly by for Lucy, so much had she on her little mind. The colony was vastly entertained—full of expectancy as to how things would really turn out. There was so much to turn out; and everything, be it remembered, must be determined within a few weeks, or so. Clouds, indeed, were gathering; the air was heavy; and in the mean time preparations for Mr. Guernsey Beaufort's grand entertainment, to which the

Mayor and Prefect even was coming, went on. The host was pronounced a "delightful, agreeable fellow," who, with no airs, was up there superintending decorations, which the confiding upholsterer was putting up. That poor craftsman had sent away orders, and was getting all sorts of things down from Paris. Twenty years later we should have heard him, warning his children against the English—warning them, too, in a miserable little shop, in a yet smaller town than Dieppe.

Thoughtful people would have remarked the curious change which a few weeks' "training," as Captain Filby called it, had wrought in the young Mrs. Wilkinson, the pretty rustic. "She's in good hands, my boy," the same judge of men and manners remarked. And yet Mr. Ernest Beaufort, to eyes of more skill and experience, would have seemed "a bad style of man," with inferior manners, and no air of refinement or breeding about him. To the

foolish “young thing” from a country parish he seemed the pink of gentility, and perfection itself.

A change, too, had come over Mr. Wilkinson, her husband. From being a “soft,” good-natured “slob” of a man, a “thorough ass,” as Mr. Blacker and some of the young men called him—a “naias,” as he seemed to the Frenchmen—he had come quite to take airs. He went about with importance, and was admitted into the sort of council of the place, composed of Mr. Blacker, Mr. Beaufort, and some more. They consulted him a good deal, as representing the money interest. The worst change of all was the change of relationship between the husband and wife, which now began to be noticed by not a few. To Captain Filby it was a special source of enjoyment.

“I was just behind them,” he said, “and they didn’t see me; and I can tell you they were at it ding dong. She gave it to him up and down. ‘Don’t interfere with me,

sir ; you have no right to do it, and I won't put up with it. Every one is laughing at you, if you could only see it.' Then, sir, *he* blew up : ' You shouldn't speak to me in that way ; it's very improper, and *I* won't have it.' ' *You* won't have it ! ' says she, with the most spiteful little laugh you ever heard in the whole course of *your* life. Oh, sir, it will come to something presently, mark my words ; it's as good as a stall at Drury Lane, sir."

These " tiffs " had nothing to do with Mr. Ernest Beaufort's attentions. Things would have been in a healthier state had such been the case. But the dull Squire, in his own conceit, thought he was the attraction of the party, and considered, by a curious infatuation, that Mr. Beaufort's homage was indirectly addressed to him—to his worth, standing, &c. Thus things grew worse, and one day Captain Filby—always watching—reported that he had seen the " pretty thing " break away from her husband with

flushed cheeks and angry eyes, "fiery as a little game cock, sir; and I have watched 'em all day since, sir, and they've never spoken."

There had been, indeed, an open battle; and the worst was, the lady had flown for sympathy to her friend and counsellor, who felt deeply for her wrongs. "I watched them down to the port, and they sat there a couple of hours on a bench. They didn't think Jack Filby had his eye on 'em," was the captain's report. She also told her troubles—"persecutions," she called it—to Lucy, her friend, who quite entered into them, and was indignant at the "cruelty" and persecution of the husband. She considered the whole quite harmless, and really admired the generous chivalry of Mr. Beaufort, who disinterestedly "stood by" the young wife, whom her husband was so persecuting.

Such was Miss Pringle's training. "We have all our trials, dear," she said. "You, Lucy, don't know what I have to suffer."

It was noticed that there was in her face, too, a little wistfulness and anxiety ; explained, by those who watched, by the gradual approach of the fatal sailing of the *Duchess of Kent*. Vivian himself was noticed to be downcast and restless, with an affected eagerness, which did not deceive the wary.

“ He’ll slip out, if there’s a chance,” said the captain, with zest, “ and God speed him ! But he don’t see his way, exactly. That Dacres is wide awake, sir, and won’t let him.”

Mr. Dacres, however, seemed quite cheerful and unconcerned. Indeed, he owned, he had never felt so happy for a long time. What puzzled him, and, at the same time, constituted this happiness, was the miraculous freedom he enjoyed from duns and persecutors. What amazed him more, was a polite letter from “ that bloodsucker, Isaacs,” as he always called him, speaking of the “ little balance standing over,” and

adding, if he was at all “distressed,” he would now be happy to assist him to a moderate extent.

“The man’s transfigured, Lulu ! What’s the meaning of it?—Maybe—I know Romilly, and Wilberforce, and the good men were for it—maybe they’ve done away with arrest and imprisonment for debt. That must be it, or something like it. By the Lord, if that’s the case, your own Harco’s himself again, and a made man ! I’ll be at the juries again, my sweet, tipping them the pure native, appealing to their noblest impulses. I tell you what, Lu,” he said, becoming grave ; “as soon as your little business is settled, and I see my little sweet manufactured into MRS. COLONEL VIVIAN, I’ll slip over and look about me. Poor papa will have his honeymoon too.”

Thus we see Mr. Dacres reckoned on the coming event as quite certain, or affected to do so. The truth was, he was a very shrewd, clever fellow, under all his fitfulness and

want of steadiness. He had his own plan fixed.

“I won’t flurry the man, or bother him,” he said. “I see he’s in some fix; but I’ll let him take his own way, like a gentleman, until it comes to the day week of the sailing. Then I’ll *slap* down on him, and come to business.”

Vivian, meanwhile, unconscious of this resolve, and feeling that Mr. Dacres was treating him with even an extra heartiness, was growing low-spirited. In this miserable dilemma, he was one evening walking along gloomily, when Mr. Blacker passed him, full of importance.

“I am in such a hurry,” he said. “Sorry I can’t stop to tell you the news. Such an arrival—such an addition! Mr. Parkes and his friend, son of Judge Parkes, one of our English bench. One of the nicest, most aile-gant mannered men, now—such *kair-teousness*,” as he called it, “and a high, well-bred air. And they have just come in

Beaufort was to be kept from her slander.

Unhappy West, whose life now was in a round of this morbid struggle, over this attack of Lucy's. It was turn—a new change. He said to "She shall not put me down in this I will live to open her eyes;" and wrote to his legal friend in England a letter, imploring him to work the thing and find the truth, and let him know that, let him come over and bring *he* would pay all—any expense.

"Poor West," said the legal friend, "what has come over him? He is excited."

BEAUFORTS.

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time for our season. I got them in at the Royal, and must run up, to see that Le Buff has taken care of 'em. By the way, his friend is in the army—quite in your way. I shall be proud to bring you and Mr. Morton together. Excuse me, I really cannot stay."

Vivian listened to him absently.

In another moment he saw Mr. Blacker pointing towards him, "in charge," as it were, of two gentlemen, walking in advance of them in his eagerness, flourishing something. Vivian turned away hastily, but Mr. Blacker was down on him in a moment.

"I brought them," he said—"I have brought them. Fortunately, just met them in time. I want them to stay——"

"Why, my dear Beau——"

"Hush, Vivian!" said the other, hastily, stopping him; "only think of meeting you here! I am so glad;" and he took his arm and led him aside. "I want to get rid of

this old bore here. We'll leave him to Parkes. Look here; will you recollect not to call me by my name of Morton Beaufort, but only Morton? I have a reason, which I will tell you of by-and-by. We shall have some fun presently, never fear. And I have come some way for it. Parkes has a friend here he wants to see." And the two gentlemen presently began to talk on old times with the eagerness of military acquaintances, and Vivian presently had let all his difficulties pass from his sight.

These few weeks grew more and more flurried. Every actor had a sense that something was drawing on, and a destiny to be accomplished in some fashion. At that very time, Lucy was in her room, with Mrs. Wilkinson sitting on the sofa, with inflamed eyes and now and again gushes of tears, telling her "miserable story."

Some officious people about the place—not "the quasi-virtuous," as Mr. Dacres called them, who would not give themselves

such trouble—had gone privately to Mr. Wilkinson and warned him. Every one was talking, they said; and it was such a pity! Mr. Wilkinson coloured; grew hot. It came on him like a revelation; he had never seen it in that light before, though he might have noticed what they now called his attention to. He had considered it rather evidence of his popularity, a compliment to his important position in the colony.

He had presently lashed himself into a sort of fury, and had gone pompously to his wife to require an instant change of conduct. He would not have himself spoken of in that way. He was not a person to be made free with. But the lady, untrained as she was, had already learned a few arts, useful, as being inflammatory on such occasions. These she could fix lightly in her husband's neck, as the banderilleros do their arrows at a bull-fight. And she at once galled him by the

cold inquiring stare of angry surprise, as who should say "This is all a joke."

"It is *not*," said he, answering the look, "and I will *not* have it. I'm not going to be talked about here. And I tell you what, unless I have a distinct engagement that you do not speak a word to that man, I shall not allow you to stay here in future."

The lady gave a forced and mocking laugh, another of the banderillero's arrows in his neck.

"I shall speak to Mr. Ernest Beau-
fort, and walk about with him as usual.
I am not going to make myself ridiculous
for any one, and—I shall stay."

"Then we shall see," said he, trembling with rage.

This was the first cannon-shot, and, before evening, everybody knew there had been a tremendous battle royal, with a defiance and challenge, and all were naturally looking forward to see how it would end.

“Was there ever such a poor old donkey?”
Captain Filby said.

She had rushed to her friend.

“He will beat me, I suppose, the next thing,” said Mrs. Wilkinson. “He treats me as if I were some wretched Turkish slave, and would sell me if he could—*so Mr. Beaufort says.*”

Lucy was a little startled at his name.

“It is very unkind of him. He will see he has done wrong, and I am sure he is good at heart. But it is very improper of him to speak to you in that way. Still, dear, I would not encourage Mr. Beaufort to say such things.”

“Oh, Mr. Beaufort understands him perfectly. He knows men, and women too, as he says. In London no man dare speak so to a lady who was his wife. He would be horsewhipped by any gentleman standing by.”

Lucy was a little confounded at these new views. How could she confute them?

But of this she had a natural instinct, that it was wrong and dangerous to be making a confidant of a gentleman like Mr. Beaufort. She was glad of the opportunity, and now spoke seriously to her friend.

“We must hope for the best, and things will come right by patience and waiting. I think it would be a pity you should say anything more about it to Mr. Beaufort. This is such a strange wicked place, and they say such things.”

“I don’t mind them in the least,” said she. “When a husband ceases to be a friend, we must look out for others. Mr. Beaufort is my true friend. He has advised me all through, and will do so. I trust in him; and if, as he says, a husband proves unworthy of you, and behaves *brutally*, you are not bound to keep measures with such a savage.”

“Oh,” said Lucy, shocked, “he could not have said *that*!”

Misunderstanding her, the other took a

letter from her bosom. “He did indeed ; I can prove it to you. See here : I got this just before I came out. I am guided by him in everything, and he says, if I only trust him, he will bring me through everything. For he feels like me in everything, he says. We have the same thoughts and the same wishes—that I was made to adorn the most brilliant scenes. Ah, what a contrast ! he so gentle, and soft, and devoted, and that——”

“Hush !” said Lucy, greatly scared ; “O ! you must not think, or talk of these things. It is not right, and will lead to mischief. You should not see so much of that Mr. Beaufort.”

“Why ?” said the other ; “why not, pray ? He wants me to go and meet him now, down beyond the lighthouse—what he calls our “tryst,” where he goes himself alone, and—thinks of all sorts of things,” she added, with a little confusion.

The foolish lady could not conceal her pride at this conquest. "I am going there now."

"No, no, you must not, for my sake! It is mischievous, dangerous. Here is pen and paper; write a line and say you cannot go, and drop him gradually."

"How absurd you are, dear!" said she, laughing in a forced manner. "You don't quite understand these things; you are not married yet. Oh no; I can quite take care of myself. What, drop Mr. Beaufort, my kind friend? How cruel that would be. Besides, I want him to advise me. What do you think? I did not tell you. But he said something of my not going to the ball. Did you ever hear of such tyranny? As Mr. Beaufort says, that ought to bring it to a crisis. We shall see; we shall see."

Lucy was helpless, and, beyond mere entreaty, could do nothing with this lady. She was frightened by the whole. It gave

a sudden proof of the dreadful nature of the place. And on this earth there is no more startling embodiment of the power of evil than such a change in a character like her friend's. Her own troubles and anxieties, now gathering, added to her depression.

Her father came in, as he said himself, "gay as a dozen o' larks." He sang, as he came up-stairs, his favourite chant :

"The light in her eye,
That mirrors the sky,
And kindles a flame in my own—
My own !
And kindles a flame in my own.

Well, Lulu, my sweet, dear girl, I've been up and down, here and there, about everywhere, singing the one song. Everybody's got the glad tidings by this time."

"What glad tidings, Harco ?"
"The wedding, you witch. The nuptials. 'Take thou this ring, love,' and all that," he added, quoting from an opera then in

the first flush of popularity. "Thursday three weeks, my pet, is the joyful day. Sing——" Here Mr. Dacres, devotionally:

"Sing the glad day,
While we thus humbly pray,
Join in his praise !

Yes ; Thursday three weeks, at half-past ten in the morning. God save the Queen !"

Lucy's eyes brightened. "What, papa ! Then Vivian has got news ?"

"I don't know ; maybe so. I've settled it that way. He and I understand each other perfectly. You are married, pet, on Thursday, same day and hour, or our friend don't make a passenger in that first line-of-packet ship, *Duchess of Kent*. No, no. It's settled now beyond a mistake, and far better so."

"Oh, papa," said Lucy, vehemently, "you should not interfere in this way ! I understand Vivian perfectly. I know his

heart thoroughly, and that he loves me, and will do anything in his power. Men have *family reasons*—”

“ Then I hope so. The only thing on my mind, sweet, is how to raise the breakfast. It won’t be so hard. We’ll have a few—just a few, and a speech or two in the good English way. I’ll have a Frenchman or two, just to show ’em how we can tickle up a jury at home. But I’ll not let in those impostors, the Beauforts. Don’t let ’em think it. Not one of ’em.”

“ Oh, why not, Harco, dear? They will be so offended.”

“ They’re all Brummagem. As for that snob, the brother—mind, I tell you—he’ll turn out a humbug!”

“ Oh, papa,” said she, suddenly, “ that poor lady, Mrs. Wilkinson, has just gone away, and I don’t know what will become of her. How can we help her? ”

“ Don’t come to me, sweet,” said he,

ruefully. "I'll want every nap. we can scrape up."

"It's not *that*, Harco." And she began to tell him the whole story.

"Is that all? The woman herself, she's a weak poor thing."

"Oh, there!" said Lucy, running to the window, "I see her coming back again. Will you see her, papa — speak to her? Won't you?"

"I will, I will, pet. Lovely woman!" added he, breaking into a quotation.

"Angels are painted fair to look like you. Ah, my dear Mrs. Wilkinson, come back to see me, I know. You made me out at the window, now I know you did."

"No," said she, hurriedly. "I wanted to settle with Lucy. Would you let *me* go with you to this ball?"

"You are not going, though," said Lucy, reproachfully. "Oh, no."

"Not going!" said Mr. Dacres. "Why

not? Would you have us getting there into realms of eternal night, groping our way distracted, with the lamp that should brighten our course quenched and in darkness?"

"My husband unreasonably wishes to keep me away, simply to annoy me, and, I suppose, disgrace me before the people."

"Lulu, darling, run and tell poor mamma I'll come to her presently. She's not herself at all this morning. Now, my dear ma'am, tell me what's this? What's your good man been doing?"

The lady again entered on the story of her wrongs very excitedly. She was indiscreet and young, as we have said, and so weak as to tell this story to the merest stranger.

He listened gravely. "But what about this fellow, young Beaufort?"

"What about him?" said she; "what but this, that he is my friend and my protector."

"I hope it will never come to *that*, ma'am," he said, gravely. "You couldn't have picked out a worse, I can tell you. He's a poor creature, Mrs. W., and you'll get no credit by the transaction."

"I shall get sympathy," said she—"sympathy and kind words, which are a great deal to me."

"No, no. Not at all. Believe me, I have an interest in you, because my little dear girl here has. But we men, you know, that knock about here, and knock about there, *we* see and say more than—our 'prayers. And Mr. Ernest Beaufort, as he calls himself, is just the lad to have his fun out of the transaction. He's a poor unchivalrous creature, and would sacrifice any one or anything. Harcourt Dacres knows a witness, and I can tell you too."

Here Lucy came fluttering back, her cheeks flushed. "He is below; he is coming upstairs. Ah! this was what you came back for, Mrs. Wilkinson!"

“As I live, no,” said the lady, passionately. “Will you believe me, I never knew it—never!”

“I tell you what,” said Mr. Dacres, with a twinkle of enjoyment in his eye, “shall we have a little bit of a play here—some true comedy? Just get into that next room, both of you, d’ye hear me? We’ll just draw this wisp of a portière, and no one will be a bit the wiser.”

“Just as you like.”

Lucy was fond of “a bit of fun,” and overcame any scruples in her friend by dragging her in quickly. In a moment Mr. Ernest’s face was put in, and he looked round with a simple air.

“I thought——” he said; “why, are the ladies all gone out?”

“Ah, you yourself, Mr. Beaufort! Won’t you sit down? They’ll be in soon,” he added, adroitly, “giving the go-by to a lie,” as he afterwards said. “Mrs. W. was here only a minute ago.”

“Was she,” said Mr. Beaufort, carelessly and insolently, “really now?”

“Oh, really now, and truly now. Sat about two feet from where you are now. Ha, ha! Ah, that’s a funny business, Mr. Beaufort. Everybody is so amused. You began in the wrong shop, sir. An Englishman’s wife is his Castle, sir. Not that I think there’s any harm in a little flirtation.”

“And do you suppose I mind how the people here amuse themselves? They know very little about my affairs, or that affair, I can tell you.”

“Well, if I might speak in a friendly way, you know—they’ll be in in a moment—I’d let the thing drop. Awkward things may be said. And Filby, you know, gives out that Wilkinson is looking on and laughing, and is posted up to everything. I must tell you, she is not quite as simple a young lady as she looks.”

“Then I could tell you, Mr. Dacres,” said the other, rising to go, “some little

things that would open your eyes, and open that gentleman's eyes also. If I were to take two passages in the next packet, I dare say you could not guess for whom I would take one?"

" 'Deed I could not," said Mr. Dacres, laughing. " We never know here, who is to slip off next."

" That gentleman may give out *his* story, if he likes; but I could surprise him very much one fine morning. If I were just to crook my little finger, and give the signal, Mr. Dacres, some one would follow me down to the packet very cheerfully. So much for your gossiping stories; so much do *they* know about it now!"

" Then you ought to blush for telling such a thing, and I take leave to tell you you're a shabby sort of admirer, Mr. Ernest Beaufort. Ha, ha! Excuse my *franchise*, as our friends here say. What you have said is very satisfactory. But thousands say it so publicly, for if she heard it, she

would be quite pleased. We shouldn't boast of *bonnes fortunes*. I must go out now, as I have a little business. Come with me, my brave caballero. You're a broth of a boy among the ladies. Ha, ha ! You don't mind my fun, do you ? So you have only to take a place in the packet, eh ? No, no. I wouldn't like to put that to Lucy, sir ; it wouldn't hang together."

"I don't understand you," said the young man, colouring.

"I hold by what I say, and I could prove it at any moment, too. I never speak without the card. I have only to say the word, and that lady——"

"Well, it's wonderful ! It astonishes me. Come along, do."

Mr. Dacres said afterwards he never was in such a mortal fright, for he was sure the woman would burst out, and there would be a scene. "And I heard the dress give a rustle inside," he said. The whole thing reminded him of Drury Lane and "dear

Brinsley's" Lady Teazle behind the screen. "And I think," added he, "I managed it a little cleverly."

When Mr. Beaufort was gone, Mrs. Wilkinson came out, a picture of shame, her eyes bent on the ground. Lucy remained, sensibly, in the little room beyond.

"Don't speak—don't say another word, Mr. Dacres," said Mrs. Wilkinson. "What *am* I to do? Oh, that I should have come to such a degradation! To hear a wretch like him, daring to speak of me in that way! But it is my own folly, all my own folly."

"He knows no better, my dear lady. Wait until by-and-by. You saw how easy I took his fine manners. I always 'smoked' him from the first. We'll hear something about all this in a day or two."

CHAPTER XIV.

A RAY OF COMFORT.

CAPTAIN FILBY had suffered severely during the winter from his habitual pains and aches, and from growing "older every day." His temper, already much inflamed by tropical service, was not improved. He did not own to these acute tortures, having a stoic pride which disdained to let the world know, that he was at all inferior to the rest, in strength or years. But he soothed his sufferings by becoming more ill natured, and more malignant, every hour.

Even to women, to whom he had hitherto maintained a sort of gruff courtesy, he had grown rude and odious in his remarks. For this sort of old creature, withering out of the world, friendless, dismal, beating against the bars of his old heart, while affections and sympathies are glowing ruddily about him, it were better that the Indian fashion obtained, and that he were carried out to the most convenient mountain to die from exposure. At all these settlements, we hear now and again, of some such old exile shivering out of life, with the greedy fingers of the foreign hireling already on the gold sleeve-links.

It was not yet come to that with Captain Filby; but his cough was very bad, his clearing of his throat a herculean hydraulic labour, most unpleasant to bystanders, and his limp more and more conspicuous. His oaths—pointed with a spasm—were even alarming. His stories and scandals were more malicious, and, it must be said,

untruthful, and told with a savage eagerness to have them accepted. Any stroke of good fortune, any gleam of happiness for others, specially roused his envy and venom.

When all the colony was busy with Lucy's little story—and we may be sure the expatriated ladies were not slack in venting any amount of sniffs and head-tossing—Captain Filby dealt with her with by far the greatest severity. One day at Mrs. Dalrymple's, his sufferings having given him a fiendish energy, he even shocked his hostess, who had great indulgence for his humours, knowing how he was racked.

“Don't trust any of the pack here,” he said; “the sham lovers and Lotharios, who are as genuine as the nobleman that come on at Drury Lane. There's not a half-a-crown among three of them; and on washing-day, how many of 'em, do you suppose, must lie in bed for particular reasons?”

He saw Lucy looking at him, as she

always did, with an unconcealed repulsion.

“Oh, yes, my dear young miss. I understand *you*. Keep up the little delusion among us. Leave my card on *you*, and you yours on me. Ask your dear papa about all *that*, when you go home. He’s pretty well behind the scenes.”

Lucy coloured, and drew herself up.

“I shall do nothing of the sort,” she said, “and you should not bring his name in, or be so free with me, or with him.”

“Oh ! is that the line, Miss Lulu ? The dear papa ! We believe in him to the end, of course. He’s immaculate.”

“To me he is,” she said, calmly, and, as Mrs. Dalrymple described it, looking through the captain, and “that is enough. How kind, how becoming of you to speak of him so to his daughter ! ”

“Come now,” said the captain, with a laugh, “Miss Lucy, keep that for your mamma or for Pringle.”

“Neither,” went on Lucy, with the same

calm tone and look, but flushing up a great deal, “do I know of any behaviour on my side that justified your addressing me so familiarly. Unless, indeed, the wretched necessity which forces us to stay here, exposing us to freedoms from those who are mere strangers ;” and she swept away from the room, leaving the amazed Filby to roll his eyes, and mutter :

“ Infernal impertinence that, to put up with from a forward little chit !”

After this rebuff, which Mrs. Dalrymple and her daughters could not help enjoying a little, more from amusement at Lucy’s spirit, than from much hostility to the captain, we may conceive he had not the most amiable feelings towards her. The pains became also much more acute, and his stories about the young girl seemed to reflect every pang. He would say : “ A regular intriguing miss, as ever was turned out of a French school. They teach ‘em all those demure faces and innocent tricks at

so much a quarter, like the music. I tell you I have seen girls all the world over, and that's as deep and scheming a creature as ever made up to a *parti*. It's shocking! Watch a little, and you will see. Pairs don't go loitering down the end of the pier for nothing, with only an old fish-woman sitting on a wall. If I had a daughter, I know—which, God be praised, I have not—I wouldn't have such tricks going on."

The captain, too, would have stories also much more circumstantial, the coinage of which were favoured by Lucy's bold and confident behaviour before the community, and whose contemptuous looks, as she passed leaning on the arm of the man she thought the most perfect in the world, seemed to challenge and defy their remarks. This little folly produced ill fruits, and though Vivian was inclined to draw back and check such unnecessary displays, Lucy's impetuosity quite overcame his prudence. Her character was, indeed,

opening every day, and acquiring a charming piquancy that was dramatic and attractive, and she was learning rapidly to take responsibility and rely upon herself. Thus the handsome man, and the pretty English "mees" went about together, were met far off on long walks over the chalk hills, along an endless expanse of "trunk lid" country, bare and worn, and whence they could look down on the great sea. Sometimes of a fine evening, they were passed at the end of the pier, in the darkness, watching the fishing-boats going out for the night.

"Nice work all this, ain't it?" Captain Filby would repeat.

Lucy having an instinct of these whispers, would not have abated a single walk, a single incident; and her look of scorn, and defiance, and contempt, as she passed the captain, galled that veteran bitterly. She was indeed quite triumphant in this course of hers. She seemed to think that such defiance won a victory over the mean, tattling crea-

tures of the place. In reality, her whole victory was merely in not hearing what they said. But she was now to be awakened.

One morning Mr. West came down, to the surprise of the two women for whom he rose with more interest than did the sun, with a calm cheerfulness. He even read the newspaper, which had long lain there neglected. He read them out scraps of English news, and speculated about what was going to happen in politics.

“I see,” he said abruptly, and smiling, “you are wondering I am so sensible to-day. I do feel more rational this morning — more like a man, less like a donkey. What must you have been thinking of me all this time, when I have been behaving like an elderly schoolboy ?”

Constance struck in, eagerly : “We don’t think so. Oh, if you knew how we pitied and felt for you, and wished we could share your trouble and suffering !”

“I know that,” he said ; “and I have

been very indifferent to all your sympathy. But there is great allowance to be made. Once this madness gets hold of one, there is no arguing—no sense nor logic in the business. Time and suffering are the only remedy. Suffering ! You see, I still talk the old folly. But henceforth, I trust—Well, do you know where I was last night ? ”

Margaret answered bluntly : “ I suppose dismally patrolling along the pier, looking out at the sea.”

“ Wrong for once, Margaret ; but right so far, that I was going there when, I passed that old church, which was all lit up, and seemed to be actually trembling with the music inside. I stopped for a moment and looked in.”

“ *You looked in ?* ” said Margaret, who was a stern puritan.

He had indeed been passing by, when he heard the music, and met the people coming out—principally young girls, who were

being prepared for confirmation, when the bishop should come round. He stood at the door, looking round the old yellow church, half in light, half in gloom, and now deserted. Presently, he saw a little door open, and the curé of the place—sharp-faced, grey-haired M. Giles, a picturesque figure—come out, and cross the church. West had a slight acquaintance with this clergyman, whom the English, true to their caste, kept in his place as a Dissenter, but who, indeed, was not conscious of this neglect, and had not time even, to think of acquaintances; for he had a laborious life among the fishermen of the place, and was known for many gentle, charitable, and unobtrusive acts. Strangers had often noticed the spare figure, with the iron-grey locks and rusty gown, flitting round street corners, as the darkness fell, on some good errand. For him Mr. West had always felt a deep interest, as though that here

was something genuine, in that mass of falsity which made up the colony. As the abbé passed, he stopped and nodded to the Englishman with a very sweet smile.

“ We have done for the night,” he said.
“ It is time to go home.”

“ You must be tired,” said Mr. West;
“ is there no one to help you ? ”

“ To be sure,” said the other, rubbing his hands. “ There is my coadjutor, who does ten times the work, and has the knack of getting through more, with only the same trouble, and doing it quite as well. Believe me, my dear Monsieur Vaist,” said the abbé, stopping before him and looking earnestly at him, “ work is our guardian angel ; and the more work we have, the more blessings we have. ‘ Laborare est orare ; ’ and when we have plenty to do, we have no time to think of the little trials and troubles, which half the world fancies are breaking its heart.”

There was something so friendly and

significant in the way in which this was spoken, that West could not but understand.

“Ah, but you have your calling, M. Giles, and do not belong to the world.”

“But you, too,—have you not your calling at home, in which I hear you have eminence? And as it seems to me,” he added, with a smile, “you are as much out of the world as I am. Are you going home? Let us come to the pier where my poor fishermen are, and which I think is as favourite a walk of yours as it is of mine. I should have been a sailor, if I had not been what I am. The sea is the purest thing on this earth.”

West remained silent. He felt a curious charm in listening to this clergyman.

“I speak freely,” said the abbé, “because our cloth has that privilege. But I remember your kindly, and secret charity, to that poor French lady and her daughters. I dare say you thought no one here knew

it. It was that which made me take interest in M. Vaist and his family, though I am afraid your sister——No matter. It is that interest which makes me speak a little freely, as I would to one of my flock, and say how distressed I am to see you so changed, M. Vaist."

West smiled bitterly. "Ah! I see! I suppose the story has reached you. I dare-say you are amused. But, as you have learned by this time, it is easy to advise, easy to convince a fool of his folly; but he remains a fool still."

"It is human nature, dear sir; yes, the nature of morning, noon, and night; of every month and every year. Alas! sir, with us, who sit and listen to the weaknesses, sins, and sorrows, it is only the old, old story. With our French here," he added, with a sigh, "it all runs to that one song—women, men, girls, youths—misery, ruin, or what they fancy misery and ruin, all coming from what they call

Love. My dear sir, you will not be angry with me: at least I speak to a practical, sensible Englishman——”

West almost startled him by a loud laugh. “Practical and sensible, indeed! But, my good abbé, it is of no use—with *me*, at least.”

“I would not say to you,” continued the abbé, gently, “what I would say to others—to pray; pray hard, and long, and fast. *That* is the simplest remedy of all. You do not belong to us. But I would repeat, ‘*Laborare est orare*’—work, occupation, interest. A little exertion—only a little—and the thing is begun; and what is begun is half done. Love! never was there anything so unreal. It is all *ourselves*. We think it is all for another. It is a mere tone and temper of the mind—all selfish, I am afraid—a dream, a phantom. I am your friend, and have a privilege,” he added, touching his hands. “I have dealt

with thousands—with men of your standing, and have treated them with that medicine, *Laborare*. For a few days it is irksome, bitter ; but, believe one who has experience, it will succeed. Go about, enjoy the blessings of life, lay out your day, take your share in what is going on about you, and you will find yourself drawn into being interested. Then go to your own home ; leave this place—a little unworthy of you ; follow your noble profession. There is an old man's talisman. It will not fail. Good night, dear M. Vaist."

West wrung his hand and thanked him. Those earnest words had inspired him with confidence. He seemed to awake. " It is contemptible, and he was right. It is a selfish and personal thing. I have been behaving like a boy. In love with a child ! They all have the story, it seems. Good Heavens, that I should have had so little care for my own dignity and self-respect !

What folly ! What a dream ! ‘ Laborare est orare.’ He is right, and there can be no harm in trying.”

He went to rest with that chime in his ears. He slept better, and came down, as we have seen, with a hope and purpose in his face.

After breakfast he went out, saw gaily dressed peasants and fishermen walking in one direction, and, asking the reason, was told it was the “ Fair of St. Peray.” Here was acceptable news ! Here was something to interest him ; and he set off to the little show with cheerfulness and purpose.

“ I shall make a day of it,” he called out cheerfully, “ and spend two or three hours. Then we shall go and see the packet come in, and—what do you say ?—dine at the table d’hôte of the Royal, and show a little life and human nature to Constance.”

“ Blessings on that good abbé ! ” said Constance, devoutly. “ His prayers have done this.” And though a faint shade of

sternness passed over Margaret's face at his name, she said, graciously, "He is a very good man, I believe." The Calvinism passed away, and left two happy women behind.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FAIR.

ON that same morning, Vivian, who was fast regaining his strength and nearly restored, only growing a little fatigued towards the end of the day, came across joyfully. "That charming little Mrs. Jaques tells me there is to be a fair at the village; and she has got Jaques a holiday, and they are going off so smart and brilliant! We must go too: it will amuse you."

Lucy delighted in an expedition of this sort, and clapped her hands with enthu-

siasm. "Oh, we must go," she cried. "I would not miss it for the world."

"What is it, my hero?" said Mr. Dacres, entering. "'There is some fun up, I am sure. Out with it, Vivy! Tell yours to command——"

"Only think, Harco, a fair, a little fair, out at St. Peray. Shan't we go? Oh, we must!"

"Must me no musts, miss," answered Dacres, sternly. "So there's a fair, is there? 'None but the *brave* deserve the fair'—eh, colonel? That's neat. Good jury-box wit."

"But what do you say, Harco?"

"Go, of course, my podgets. In this dry sandy valley we call life, it has been my maxim never to pass such little scraps and patches of grass as we may meet. Let us three make a party and go."

So they did, and set off. It was a charming day, bright and cheerful, lightening even the monotonous French high road

along which they walked for a short time. Presently they struck into the fields, which, indeed, about here, were pleasantly cut up with tracks and footpaths, the farmers about being pastoral, and good natured also. The fair was four or five miles away, and they met many of the country people in their best and most theatrical dress, hurrying to have their little innocent enjoyment. The three walked on together, and Lucy said she was now *so* happy. Mr. Dacres's companionship, however, was but of a fitful sort, for as they would pass a little auberge, he complained of fatigue, and, greatly admiring "the quiet peace and innocence" of the spot, would protest he must have just "two seconds" on the bench under the tree, and would pick them up at the next field. This he certainly did, much more exhilarated. In truth, the two lovers—they may wear that old-fashioned official name—did not miss him. They were busy with that one absorbing topic, which for

such a pair has a vast height, depth, and width, that embraces the whole world.

“I am so happy to-day,” said Lucy, dancing, rather than walking, as she spoke. ‘I feel as if I were going to enjoy myself. Ah! What a delightful world it is! So kind—so amiable—so pretty! What do they mean—our clergymen—by saying it is hollow and false, and all that?’

He smiled, and then sighed. “I used to think so too, and I used to be timorous for the future. I dreaded what might come; but now I have learned to enjoy the present, and shut my eyes to whatever may come.”

“Haven’t you heard papa talking of that?” she went on, with animation. “He says we don’t half discount all our amusements. He puts it so funnily: ‘Twenty per cent. old pictures, twenty more, tons of coal, fifty per cent. in poisonous wine or an old gig: these representing our sorrows, there remains only

ten per cent. in real cash for our joys.' Papa has such droll fancies."

"Ever so many of those bills have been discounted for me," he said, sadly. "There is one nearly due now, and only a few weeks or so to run——"

"You are not thinking of *that*?" said Lucy, anxiously. "You don't mind what papa says—it is all his love, his interest for me. *I* understand you, and know what is on your mind. Men cannot understand each other so well."

"But you do not, dearest, I fear," he said, "and you cannot, either. I dare not tell you everything which I ought. And yet what right have I to ask you to take anything on trust?"

"What right?" said Lucy, seriously. "Do you mean that I would not accept your saying you had a great and necessary reason without knowing it?"

"Ah, yes, Lucy; but it is not fair to you, it is not loyal, it is not honourable. Yet what *can* I do? I vow here to Heaven I

am helpless! You know how I love you, and what I would do for you; and yet what must I seem, what must you think of me, if I am obliged to——”

“ Do you whatever you think right,” said Lucy, enthusiastically. “ Whatever you must do, I can trust, I can believe in you, and can believe, too, there is some necessary and honourable reason.”

“ I knew that,” he said, looking at her with infinite sadness. “ And if I was forced, as I may be, to leave this,” he added, slowly, “ for two years or more—for there is no knowing——”

Lucy’s face fell.

“ Ah, am I asking too much ? ”

“ No,” she said, passionately, “ it was not that. But not to see you all that time.”

He smiled, and looked down fondly on her. “ No matter what the discount, as your father says, I am content. Let me enjoy the present, and not trouble myself with what may never happen. But what

ever takes place, whatever step I am driven to, I may trust that you will still believe me; at least, that you will not think the worst, but at least wait; and, as I live, time will clear all up!"

Lucy looked a little anxious, but her bright face was clear in a moment. "I promise—I swear," she said, and put her hand in his, "I engage. After all, there is no merit in confidence where there is nothing to doubt."

"Yet we shall be so happy," he said, with exultation. "We shall enjoy ourselves to-day."

Now came up Mr. Dacres, trolling to himself about the "Lass of Killiney," a lady whose charms he sang with much feeling and many trills and turns.

"Through night and its shadows,
Through mornings so shiny,
I'm mournfully seeking
The lass of Killiney—
Kill-i-i-ney,
The bee-you-tiful lass of Killiney."

A woodcutter in sabots looked after him with grave amazement, not at the singing, but at the mournful tones and pathetic shaking of the head.

“ Well, my chick-a-biddies—how the dust flies ! The little cogs and springs of my voice want oiling a little. Ah, if you saw me at the assize-dinner, when the cloth was drawn, and that old raven Jackson, Q.C., croaks out that he wants the ‘Lass of Killiney !’ *I* make her roll up the table and down again ! I give her to ‘em with a vengeance ! But I can’t do these feats here. The human voice, sir, must be fattened and made rich, as you would cattle on its native pasture. Yet, take me as I am, Lulu—rusty, gone to seed—hungering and thirsty for a draught of my own native air, you might back Papa against the best shouter of ‘em all in their best Caffy concert.”

They reached the little village in something over an hour’s time. The sound of

the drum and flute directed them to a field close by, which was all bustle, frolic, motion, and shifting colours. There were tents, and booths, and waggons, after the English race-course pattern ; but the whole had a gayer and more theatrical air.

“ Save us, Lulu ! just look at the merry-go-rounds ! Why, they’re going by steam ! ”

To see half a dozen small wooden horses, of the very gayest skins, with long-legged and perhaps corpulent riders, flying round after each other at a headlong speed, each taking off a small ring on his “ marling-spike ” as he shoots by, has all the air and excitement of a real race—adding also the grotesque attitudes, the sprawling, the looking back, the exultations, and the comic remarks of the riders. Lulu laughed with delight at the comic and childish antics of the full-grown French men and women, whose whole souls were absorbed in their pastime.

Now came up the parti-coloured old

women in queer caps, and yellow and scarlet shawls, and with what seemed real drums on their backs, which, when opened mysteriously, as drums never were, drew crowds of children, eager for the delicious banquet of cakes seen stored within. Lulu was invited a thousand times over, and with many a significant speech, to purchase these dainties. Surely her handsome gentleman—her splendid gentleman—he would buy for his lovely sweetheart—a pair made for each other, and would live together happily, and see the loveliest and most blooming family in the world grow up about them! These rustic compliments, delivered in a shrill tone, and heard by all around, bathed Lucy in blushes, and made Vivian smile. Mr. Dacres would have burst into one of his loud laughs of enjoyment had he been there, but he had “slipped off into a cool place.” The pair, again, did not miss him. A party of two, as Mr. Dacres himself would have said, is “much

more handy to work," is more compact and rounded off; and Lucy and her lover went about from this eccentricity to that.

Here was the woman in the cart selling drugs and cures and speaking with a fluency that amazed Lulu. Here were little shops where the most flimsy but elegant toys and trifles were sold: gaudy and gay and cheerful as butterflies, but with not nearly so long a life; and which gradually fell to pieces, to Lulu's amazement, as she carried them about. There were yet greater delights—a little menagerie—"Mènagerie Cosmopolitaine"—with *one* bear, as the *pièce de résistance*, a theatre, and an exhibition of highly trained dogs and monkeys, which Vivian had seen somewhere and recognized, and pronounced would be well worth a visit.

It was quite a happy holiday. Then they went away and walked in the green lanes. Many remarked the handsome gentleman, and pretty girl on his arm, and

the gentle women's eyes followed them and marked his fond look, as his face was turned to hers, and hers looking up so trustfully at his, and who talked to each other with interest. But presently two mariners, who had walked over from the Port, and who had witnessed the scene of the rescue, told a rustic or two, and Lucy soon discovered that her hero was being followed with admiring looks of curiosity, and even heard some of those rapturous soliloquies with which French women express their admiration of a handsome man. She was proud indeed.

Towards the afternoon, they returned to the fair, wondering not a little what had become of Mr. Dacres. Suddenly she thought she heard his cheerful voice, and, turning round, actually saw Harco, a "marlingspike" in one hand, flying round, mounted on a very garish cob, dappled vermillion and white all over, like a clown's trousers. He was in great spirits and

exhilaration, his coat-tails flying out, and was calling to the centre of motion to get on faster, faster, and turning round every moment to a stout grizzly Frenchman behind, with a very open collar. Papa Harco nodded to Lucy pleasantly as he flew by. "Ah! Lu, if I had only my wig and gown here!"

After he had dismounted, he came to them, with his arm in that of the stout Frenchman. "That's what I call sport; next door to a kill in the open, with the hounds. I say, Vivian, if some of the circuit lads saw this! I am in such feather, I'd play leapfrog with my Lord Chief Justice himself. By the way, let me introduce Colonel Pepin—a fine man, sir. Soldiers should know each other."

The "ancient colonel in retreat" (Mr. Dacres was often very droll on this description, which was the colonel's own—"couldn't he say *retired* at once?") bowed stiffly and with disdain to Vivian; but

smiled and simpered at Lucy with infinite homage. This was, indeed, the introduction he wanted. This officer was quite egg-shaped as to figure, and his head and neck together made up the shape of a Jersey pear. His throat was in creases. Yet, like every Frenchman, of every time of life, and condition, he thought himself handsome, captivating, and irresistible. Vivian he dismissed as a poor creature.

“We’re all to dine together,” said Papa Harco. “The colonel, who is very strong in that line, will look after the ordering. I’ll back him for as good a spread as ever adorned the snowy damask. He guarantees the vintages too.

“Wine, wine, liquor divine,
And served by the loveliest Hebe of mine !”

He often talked, later, of an amusing French colonel, whom he “had picked up, out *riding*.”

But Vivian understood the retired French colonel perfectly. He said, coldly and

firmly, that he was sorry, but they must go home, as it would be dark soon.

“Oh yes, papa,” said Lucy, eagerly, “you know we must go. Though,” she added, wistfully, “it *is* very pleasant here.”

“Is the gentleman delicate, or afraid of catching a cold?” said the colonel “in retreat,” contemptuously. “Why, the amusement is only beginning.”

“You are quite right,” said Vivian, gravely, “I *am* afraid. But, apart from that, Miss Dacres wishes to return.”

“Not she,” said Mr. Dacres, getting more into the spirit of the thing every moment. “Why, we’ve to spread the board yet, and wreath the bowl. We must have something. Nature, bounteous mother, sir, can’t live upon air. I am as empty as an Established church. No! no

Wine! wine! nectar divine!

Come, *do* stay, Lulu. I can’t go back, you know, when I have once begun. I’ve laid

myself out, you know. I don't find myself in spirits, in this sort of way often."

"Oh, then we must stay," said Lucy, eagerly. "What harm? Poor Harco," she whispered to Vivian, "his heart is set on it."

They did stay. So the pleasant day went by, the excitable Dacres overflowing with spirits. By-and-by he stopped to speak to Lucy, drawing her aside with mystery.

"I say, Lulu love, was that West cruising about here? You did not meet him?"

"No, dear. Where?"

"Because I'd have sworn I saw his hang-dog face looking out from behind a bush, like a Sambo in a jungle. But he was gone when I looked again. Maybe it was imagination—the baseless fabric of a vision."

Vivian turned quickly

"He is not come to *that*, I hope," he said, angrily. "He is not turned spy, surely?"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LITTLE DINNER.

IN the interval, Vivian and Lucy wandered about, on this joyful day of the fair, inexpressibly happy. At "six sharp" they were at the café, where a neat little table for four had been laid, and the best dinner of the place ordered. Other tables near them were filled with guests. It was a busy time.

They waited a long time, and soon guessed, what was the truth, that the fitful Dacres had forgotten the whole, and had "picked up" some yet more pleasant

friends, with whom he had gone off to dine at a far better establishment.

“I am not sorry,” said Vivian. “We have waited long enough; and, had I been consulted, I should not have had that officer—at least, with you.”

“He was charming,” said Lucy, slyly. She was in great spirits. “And so gallant! And I am so sorry he is not here.”

“Why should we not have our little dinner?” said Vivian. “No one knows us here.”

“Oh, I should so like it!” said Lucy, clasping her hands. “As for the gossips, I can despise them. It is enough for them to say it, and I will go against them. Besides,” she added, gravely, “if poor Harco came back and found us gone away——”

“Yes,” said Vivian; “let us have our little dinner, and let me enjoy life while I may.”

Women at other tables noticed the pair

with interest. They called him “ *beau garçon*.” It was in the garden of the *café*, which was surrounded with arbours and little tables set out, and lamps already twinkling among the trees. Music, although of an indifferent sort, was playing in the centre. By-and-by, there was to be a dance. Soldiers of the infantry of the line, hands deep in pockets, were lounging about, waiting for that blissful amusement. One had already planned how he would humbly, and with all politeness, secure the hand of the charming “ *mees* ” who was sitting in the arbour.

“ Oh, this *is* happiness ! ” said Lucy, in delight. “ What a charming day to think of ! ”

“ And something for me, too, when I—— But again, I will have no foreboding. I will never be gloomy; and whatever you do with me, or however you treat me, you shall see no change on my face, no wild eyes nor wicked glances.”

Lucy laughed. "I know why you say that, and who you are thinking of. It is a little absurd, and people think it strange. Poor Mr. West! and yet I so pity him."

"Pity him!" said Vivian, warmly. "I am afraid there is a morbid vindictiveness under all that. It is speaking too gently of him. As for me, he glares at me, as I pass him, in a way that would be alarming, if it were not comical. Poor soul! Yet I daresay he was preyed upon by this delusion of being injured, until it has taken hold of him. Sometimes he seems to be a little unsettled in his mind."

"That occurred to me, too," said Lucy, gravely, and with much concern. "And yet he is *so* changed. He was once—and not long ago—oh! so noble, so kind, so chivalrous! I would have done anything for him, and liked him so much; but even then he was odd," added Lucy doubtfully. "Curious—for papa wished me to promise to marry him, and *he* wished it; and I had

come that very day from Miss Pringle's, and had never *seen any one*," went on Lucy, apologetically. "But he took such a curious turn, and wouldn't hear of it. He said I must wait for years, perhaps,—and must learn to like him, so that, unless I felt I could do so after a long, long time, it must not be thought of. He forced this on me, and made it a bargain."

"An odd being, indeed," said Vivian, smiling. "Fancy me doing that!"

"Then he comes back," went on Lucy, "and he finds that I have done what he wished; and of a sudden, all his liking, and good sense, and his wish for *my interest*, change into a sort of fury. I have an instinct that at this moment he hates me, and would kill me if he could."

"You may despise him, dearest Lucy. He shall do you no harm, not even by so much as a look, while I am with you. But we may be charitable, and believe that this is

some morbid brooding. That strange sister of his, too!"

"Yes, yes," said Lucy, eagerly. "I am sure that is it, and that he is good; but that he is a little unsettled in mind. Poor, poor Mr. West, if it should be that!"

"And do you know," said Vivian, "I begin to think your father was right in thinking he saw his face to-day. It is just like what a man in that state of mind would do—follow and spy on us."

"But Papa!" said Lucy, starting. "What can have become of him? He should have come back by this time; and we are to get home. It is so late."

"He is here, don't be afraid," said Vivian, rising. "He has got with some of these good fellows, and thought we would be rather dull company for him. I am sure he is in the *café*, or close by here, at the Silver Horn opposite. Shall I run and ask?"

“Do, do,” said Lucy, hurriedly, getting her “things,” “and find him.”

He was not likely to do that, for Papa Harco was at this moment delightfully engaged at a capital café about a mile off, with two French gentlemen and an English friend, enjoying themselves. A comic French gentleman had given them “The Drum-Major’s Song,” with a drum accompaniment on the table, that made all the glasses fly into the air ; and Mr. Dacres’ turn having now come, he was warbling, with infinite pathos and expression,

“Earth ne’er saw so fair a cree-ature !
Sweet Maria of the Vale.
She my love, all heart and nature——”

Vivian had been gone about a moment, when a stout gentleman came up, bowing and simpering to Lucy, whom she recognized as the ancient French “colonel in retreat.” She received him with her natural air of welcome, for she knew now her father was

at hand. "Where is he?" she said; "where did you leave him? We wish to go home."

"Go home, my dear mees," said the colonel, sitting down beside her on the outside, and thus cutting off her exit, "what folly! Just as I come up, to lay myself at your feet. Nay, you must not turn away those liquid swimming eyes from one, who would be proud to be your adorer." From the colonel's own eyes, much more entitled to be described as "swimming" than Lucy's, it was plain that he had recently been enjoying the pleasures of the table. Much alarmed, she moved away, and tried to rise and escape from him. The half-pay colonel followed her. "Ah, pretty little colombe, what are you afraid of? Of me, your adorer? Come, don't be unkind, lovely mees."

"Sir," said Lucy, in great agitation, but not at all losing her presence of mind, "you

must go away ; and you must let me pass, or, sir, I shall call some one."

" What, to Jules or Charles, who know me as well as my own mother ? Nonsense ; sit down, and do not be foolish. There is no use. Your friend won't return. I sent him a long way to look for that good child, your papa."

" Oh, what shall I do ! " cried Lucy, in terror at this sense of desertion and helplessness.

" You may stay with me, my loveliest, and we will be happy. Your lover is gone ; why shall not I do in his room ? Come, sit down, charming mees." Seizing her wrist, he gently drew her down into the seat beside him.

Lucy was paralysed with terror. Another girl would have screamed, but she would not for the world have a crowd and confusion. All she could find strength to do was to say in English, " Is there no one here to help me ? "

Almost as she spoke she saw a familiar face gazing at her with sad, solemn, and sorrowful eyes fixed upon her. That grave figure was standing before them both, but without speaking or moving.

The colonel looked at him a moment, then said sharply, "Well, monsieur, have you finished? Have you taken your notes for our portraits?"

West did not answer him, but said in English to her, "This is *quite* charming! Is this your last and newest friend?"

Lucy was so astounded at this turn, that she forgot her situation and its terrors. Her lips curled, and with scorn she replied, "Is this your way of befriending a girl? Is this your noble revenge!"

His eyes flashed. "Pray what can you expect from one, *who is unsettled in his mind?* How can *he* behave rationally? I heard *that speech.*" Then he turned to the colonel. "Sir, you have made a mistake. This young lady is not alone here, and I must

ask you to retire. I will look to her and take her to her friends."

The colonel twirled his moustache savagely. "Come, that is very excellent! Do you know, sir, *you* seem to be the intruder here. I can see by mees's looks that you are not over>Welcome. She wants none of your lectures and warnings."

"You see," said West, still to her, "you see to what you have exposed yourself."

"Come! Do you hear me?" said the colonel, standing up and speaking furiously. "Do you want a soufflet to make you move?"

This ugly word roused West. "I am not going to make a brawl before this young lady, and have gendarmes called in. There is another way of doing this."

"Ah," screamed Lucy, in delight, "there he is! Oh, you have come back, dear Vivian! *You* will protect me. You will save me, if no one else will!"

She had run round to him—away from

both—and was on his arm. Vivian saw how things stood in a second.

“Surely,” he said, perhaps on purpose, “with your friend, Mr. West, here, no one would have ventured——”

“And what do *you* want?” said the “colonel in retreat,” now baffled. “So you are her preserver! Then, let me tell you, mees was not so anxious for you, after all. Bah! What are you worth!”

“Do not speak to me, if you please,” said Vivian, coolly, and it seemed to Lucy with the most splendid hauteur. “Why do you intrude your drunkenness here on a private party? I give you now two seconds, or I call that gendarme, who has his eye on you already——”

The colonel gave one look of ferocity, recollected himself and became quite changed. With a ferocious politeness he bowed, and then drew himself up, saying: “I see; very good, monsieur, and very good, *you*, too, monsieur. All in good time; every one in his

turn. I have the honour to wish you both good night. Mademoiselle, receive my homage."

"Another minute," said Vivian, when he had gone, "and I had taken him by his thick throat, and kicked him from the place. A low ruffian. But, Mr. West, I am astonished! *You*, an Englishman and a friend, to look on so long!"

"Yes," said Lucy, her voice trembling, "Mr. West was letting me be insulted there before his face. He would have let this man go on, only, thank God, *you* came. As I live, he was taking no notice, and, as I believe, would have left me, dear Vivian."

West was speechless, and looked from one to the other a little wildly. "No! no! You to say this!"

"He was too busy," Lucy went on, in the same tone of bitter contempt, "listening, and eavesdropping to our conversation. He could do that, but he could not be generous to raise his hand for one he hated!"

West said not a word. Vivian looked at

him from head to foot, and said, half pityingly: "I am sorry for this. But come away, dearest, we must get back. Your good father, it seems, went off long ago to Dieppe. I have got a carriage waiting, and I think it better that we should get home as quickly as possible."

West stood there, looking after them in a sort of stupefaction. Long after did he recall Lucy's haughty contempt. It had pierced him like a dagger. Suddenly he felt Vivian's hand on his arm. "The carriage is here, and you had better return with us. You should do this, and I think it would be only right——"

"What!" said the other, bitterly. "You think I am so weak and *unsettled in mind*, that I cannot be trusted here alone?"

"What folly! This sensitiveness is worthy only of pity; but I am sorry you should have condescended to *that*."

"You dare not charge me with such a thing," said West, vehemently. "She dare

not, either. It is a slander. Do not think I will submit to you two—leagued to torture me out of all happiness, and honour, and life itself ! ”

“ There is no such thing dreamed of,” the other said, calmly, “ except in your own morbid imagination. The reason I ask you to return with us is for *her* sake. You know what sort of a place Dieppe is.”

“ I see,” said West, bitterly ; “ for fear of the stories ! But will *that* affect the matter ? What about the rest of this precious day ? All this evening, when she was wandering over the country with you ! Who will explain or clear up *that* ? I tell you it is shocking and discreditable. And you come to *me* to patch up things. I shall have no part in it. I refuse.”

Vivian looked at him in astonishment and sorrow, and, without a word, turned away. In a few moments, West heard the wheels of their carriage.

The unhappy gentleman, looking still in

the direction in which they had disappeared, repeated vacantly: "yes, they are right; it is coming fast to *that*. Madness will finish all; and perhaps it will be the best end of all. The cruel, cruel girl! But she—they shall not be happy in my shipwreck. They shall have real cause to fear or to hate me."

CHAPTER XVII.

A CHANGE.

SUDDENLY a scheme darted into his head. That Frenchman, "the colonel in retreat," he would not pass over what had occurred. Then he would gladly meet him, anywhere and anyhow. "And if he kills me, which he is sure to do, that pitiless girl will have that blood on her head, and may then repent!" Here was a practical plan, action, something "to do," which he longed for.

"Why, West, my boy," said a voice, "you look like Hamlet and the ghost. Methinks

I see my father's spirit. Hey? What ails you? Where's 'my Lulu?' as that fool of a Dacres calls her; and where's l'among—l'among aimay? Eh? Does that touch you under the fifth rib?"

West was quite ready to resent Captain Filby's impertinence; but he had a reason for restraint. "They are gone away," he said, calmly; "gone home."

"What, together? Oh, nice pranks! Then I saw some of their proceedings to-day."

"I dare say," said West. "I can believe anything—of him, at least. Is it generous, is it honourable, is it fair, for a man who should know the world, to take advantage, because a young girl likes him, and bring her to a place of this sort, to be insulted by common ruffians?"

"Insulted by common ruffians? Phew!" said the captain, greatly interested. "You don't tell me so?"

"I am afraid—that is, I am glad—I have been drawn into a quarrel with a French

captain here, about it. I have no friend. I never had any, in my whole life, and perhaps it has been the best for me. But you, even as an Englishman, you would not stand by, and see one of the same country go out to be murdered ? ”

Captain Filby shaded his old eyes to get a good look at West. His first impression was “Drunk ; ” his next, “Mad as any hatter alive ! ” But he relished the proposal. In the regiment he had often assisted in such affairs. There was one young man who it was said owed his death to the management of Captain Filby, who had ferociously refused an apology. “I’d be glad to see you shoot a Frenchman, West : and though this infernal rheumatism is racking my life, I’ll go out with you. And, what’s more, I have the old pair of executioners with me.” His face quite lit up with pleasure at this proposal of enjoyment ; and indeed he told West that he would find it do him a world of good, and bring all to a head nicely.

As the captain turned away, a stout, unhealthy-looking man, not unlike Colonel Pepin, but a good deal shabbier, came up to West with a bow. "I am Pequinet, formerly lieutenant. (He was also "ancient" and "in retreat.") "The honour of my friend, Colonel Pepin, was wounded to-night by your behaviour. You will permit me to have the honour of informing you that, he insists on reparation."

"Which he *shall* have," said West, with alacrity. "When and where you please; as long and as often as you like. Now."

"Folly, stuff!" said Captain Filby, thrusting himself forward. "What *are* you saying? Leave this to me, or leave it alone. Tomorrow, sir! All in good time. We shall see you in Dieppe, and be delighted."

They drove home. He dropped Captain Filby at his own house; then walked away himself. As he was crossing the Place, a figure fluttered by him, whom he looked at absently, and hastened on. The figure had

hurried after him, and was beside him. Why, "mon ami," it said, "I am so delighted. I heard of you to-day from your good sister. God will bless this noble attempt of yours to conquer yourself!"

West answered him impatiently: "I have made no exertion, and want no blessing. The finest and most perfect nature could not do it. All the demons of hell seem leagued against me, to persecute and harass me!"

The abbé looked at him sorrowfully. "After all, it is only the usual course. We must try many times before we succeed, and fail, and fail again. I did not expect it. We must not lose heart."

"Ah; we can all preach," said West, bitterly. "I have been too gentle hitherto. Good night."

"Hear me a moment," said the abbé, anxiously. "I am going your way——"

"I am tired of advice," said West, stopping impatiently, "and I am not one of your flock, M. l'Abbé. Oh! forgive me, dear,

good sir; but you know not what I have gone through, and what I have to go through. If you knew *that*, indeed—But leave me alone, for God's sake!"

The abbé looked after him sorrowfully, and then went his way without a word.

As West went upstairs, the two women heard his heavy step enter his own room, and shut the door impatiently. The two faces were turned to each other with blank consternation. They knew the whole story, as though they had witnessed it themselves. Indeed, on his mental state they hung suspended, like relatives or children on the health of an invalid parent, whose restoration of to-day, or relapse of to-morrow, sends joy or gloom through the house.

They did not see him that night. In the morning at breakfast-time, they read a whole night of trouble in his face, with the enforced calm infinitely more distressful. They knew he had been out betimes that morning. He had come back moody and

silent, yet with a strange and restless fire in his eye. Then, to their greater astonishment, Captain Filby called, being "made up," as Mr. Dacres would have said, "to the ninety-nines"—whatever standard that was. All that day West remained at home. They heard his ceaseless pacing. Their wistful faces were turned often to each other, with a hopeless speculation. Something dreadful, it seemed, was coming.

About three o'clock he came in to them.

"I am going away," he said, abruptly; "perhaps for an hour or two, perhaps for a very, very long time. I cannot endure this any longer. I am weak, wretched, helpless, contemptible. I have let this miserable childish delusion prey on me, until I cannot live or sleep. Dear Margaret and Constance, I have been very selfish and cruel to you both, but you will forgive me. It is time it should end, one way or the other."

"Oh! Gilbert, Gilbert, what does all this

mean?" cried Margaret, suddenly becoming natural. "What are you going to do?"

At that moment the bonne came up to say that a gentleman, M. Vivian, wished to see him. At that name West started, and went down to him. Vivian was cold, and even stern.

"I have only just learned," he said, "that you are about taking a step which——must not be thought of for a moment."

West understood him perfectly.

"Why not, pray?" he said, calmly. "It is my own affair altogether, is it not?"

"Why not?" repeated Vivian, excitedly. "First, because *she* is concerned, and we must not have her pure name sullied by any vulgar quarrel."

"It is *my* affair," repeated West, slowly. "Her name is not concerned at all. Who wishes to sully it?"

"Not concerned? Do you know what sort of a place this is? I am astonished you

do not see this yourself," said Vivian, passionately. "I *did* think you were noble and generous, and that her name, or any woman's name, would have been a talisman. But there is another reason, which is conclusive. I have seen the chief of the police; and the person you quarrelled with, and wish to meet as a gentleman, is a low ruffian, who was turned out of the army years ago."

West stared at him, but put a constraint upon himself. "And you," he said, abruptly, "who are so interested for her—what is your office? What is to be your relation to her, if I might ask? Do they not say she is to marry you?"

Vivian coloured. "That would be my greatest happiness, and I do look forward to it on one day."

"Ah!" interrupted the other, fiercely: "I see. The usual generality! I can see what that means. That will not impose on me. I have watched you. I can see behind *that*

trick. There is some game being played ; and perhaps Heaven may put it into my hands to frustrate it." He was looking at Vivian hard.

" What do you mean ? " said the other, turning still paler.

" Not from any love to her : I owe *her* nothing. But with you I can reckon. There is some mystery in this hanging back. How confused you grow ! I *am* right. By Heaven, I *am* ! "

" This is all madness," said Vivian, turning away.

" Yes," said West ; " but you shall find I have method too. Now we understand each other, Colonel Vivian ; and let her understand me, and tell her her cruel and unkind words have sunk into my heart. God forgive her ! "

" That is all for yourself," said Vivian, excitedly. " And I warn you, in return, we shall be on our guard ; and I tell you, plainly,

any frantic step on your side shall be met on mine in a way you little dream of."

"Good," said the other, "we understand each other now!"

But we, who know what sort of a place Dieppe was, its surprising sensitiveness to the smallest rumour or whisper of a rumour, can conceive that such a momentous adventure as Lucy's must permeate the place like water through a gravelly soil.

Before the evening came, Mr. Blacker, the official scandal-monger, was in possession of some strange details. He had become inflated with the vast importance of the matter, and had gone express to Mrs. Dalrymple. "Such an awkward, such a very doubtful business! God forbid, ma'am, it was *my* daughter. West, I am told, found her down at that little dirty guinguette, actually sitting with some low Frenchman. I am afraid, badly brought up; but you know, with that

harum-scarum father, what could you expect?"

Mrs. Dalrymple, who had always been partial to West, and knew his worth, had long ago "turned" against Lucy. She now spoke warmly. "I am afraid I could believe anything of that girl. You know how lightly and cruelly she treated poor Gilbert West. The man is suffering, there before her eyes, and she hasn't even a kind look or word for him."

"Oh! but my dear lady," said Mr. Blacker, with infinite relish, "I haven't half done. I was coming to him. What does she do, I'm told, but drag *him* into a quarrel with this questionable French Colonel of hers."

"Good Heavens!" said Mrs. Dalrymple, absorbed in interest, "you don't tell me so! What things we hear every day!"

"That poor infatuated West, in his gentle way, tried to remonstrate with her, and she

turned on him, ma'am, and got her champion to turn on him; and only for the police, ma'am, there'd have been a duel."

This was really dramatic news for the colony. Not every day did they meet with a morsel so substantial.

The Dear Girl was utterly unconscious of the fiery cross of scandal being thus sent round. Indeed, she never had been so happy as during these days; for since that holiday, "her Vivian's heart," as the old story-tellers would say, had never been so much hers.

Vivian himself seemed now not to think of the old difficulties—perhaps shut his eyes to them. He told her he had a presentiment that they were to be soon happy and that shortly, which was accepted as an official revelation. They were both living in a dream; and, above all, she could meet with calm eye and cold gaze, the look of the man who had shown his hatred and malignity to

her in unmistakeable terms. But as she walked by exultant and triumphant on her lover's arm, she could not but notice the smiles, and looks, and whispers which followed her.

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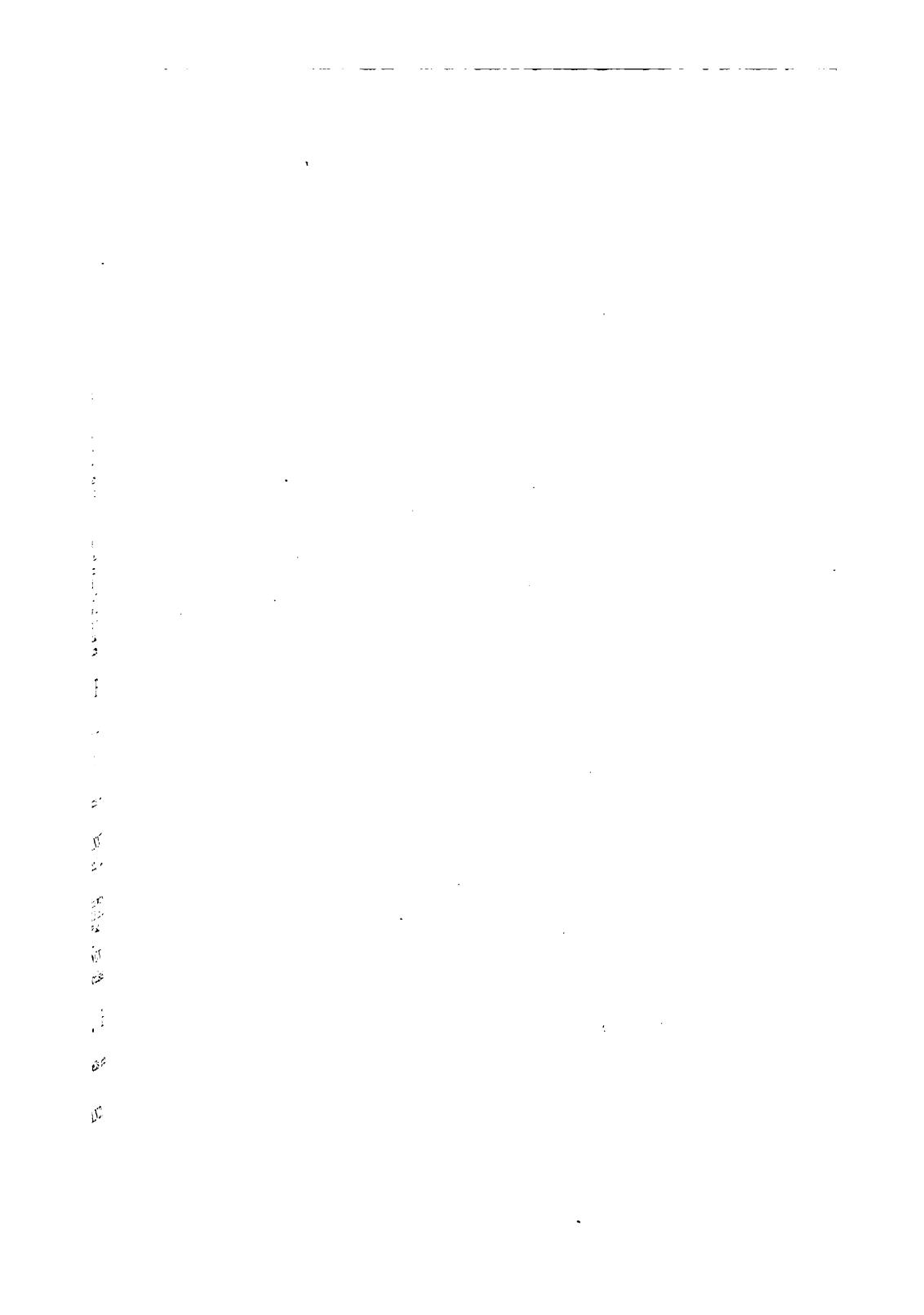
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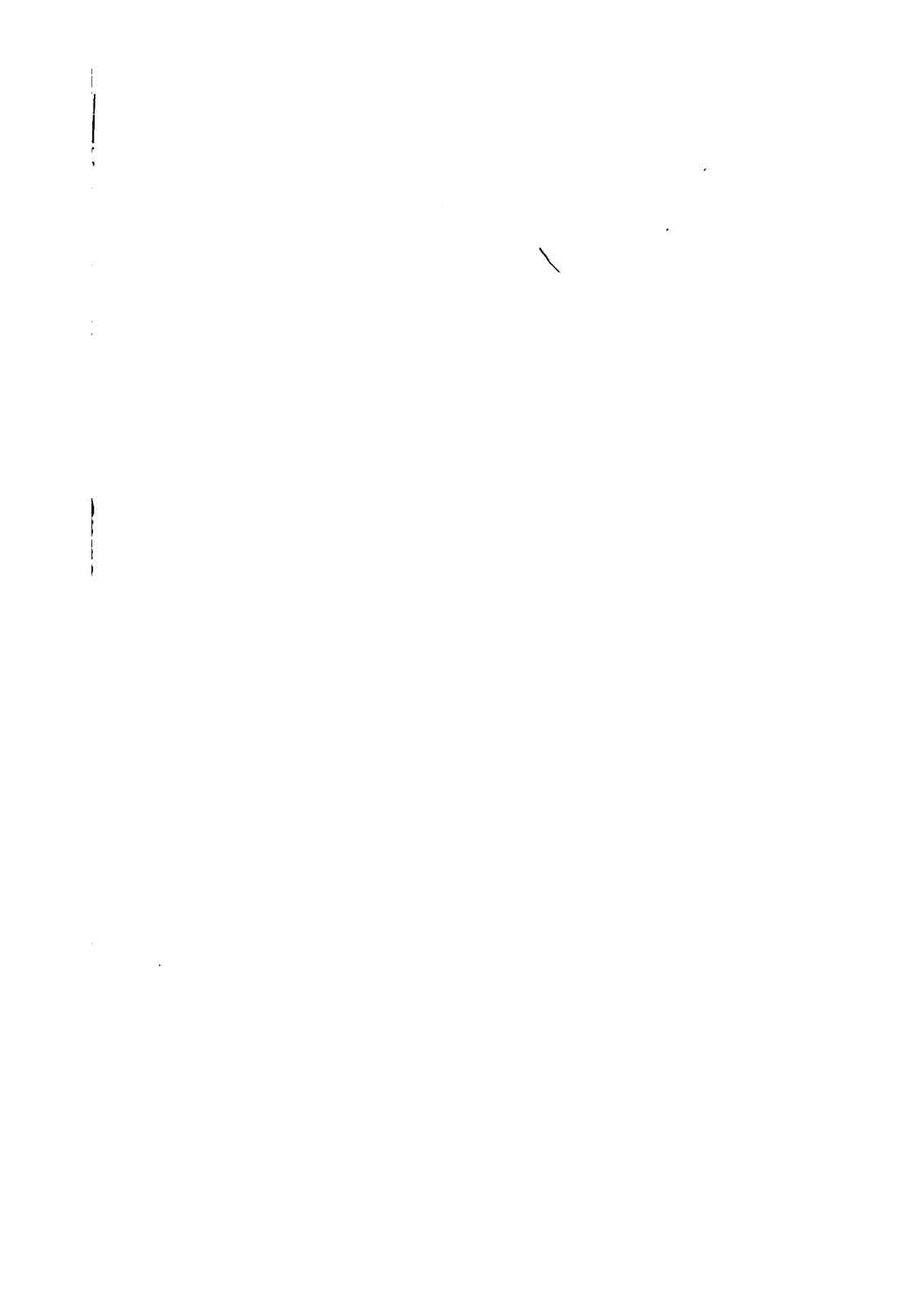
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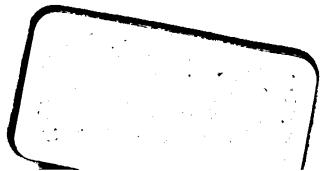
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